

黙示録 アリス

Apocalypse Alice

The illness of a girl ending the world

鏡貴也

Takuya Miyama

ILLUSTRATION / 加藤勇樹

テークンシステムワークス

Glaze State



ファンタジア文庫

鏡貴也
●かがみたかや

初めまして。
鏡貴也です。久しぶりの新作でわく
わくしています。
『伝説の勇者の伝説』『いつか天降
の黒ウサギ』『終わりのセラフ』な
どを書いています。
しかしこの本を書くときは当然、
『黙示録アリス』の鏡貴也と呼ばれ
るよう！ 代表作になるよう！ と
頑張りました。これからよろしくお
願いします！

鏡貴也

ILLUSTRATION 加藤勇樹
Ark System Works
Yoshiki Kato

黙示録アリス

Apocalypse Alice

The illness of a girl ending the world

イラスト：加藤勇樹(アークシステムワークス)
カバーデザイン：草野剛



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火城白

Hakken Shiro

HEADPHONES TYPE: LEFT

MAGIC SLOT: 新機海スイッチ

千仙閃光スイッチ

「犠牲はゼロで、すべてを手に入れる。
生きて戻るぞおまえら!」

水色群青

Mizusora Gunjou

HEADPHONE TYPE: RIGHT

MAGIC SLOT: 海月輪スイッチ

防覇帝スイッチ

「あたしが!
あたしたちこそが!
この迷宮を
攻略して救世主に
なるのよ!」

気流キリ

Kiryu Kiri

HEADPHONE TYPE: LEFT

MAGIC SLOT: ???

「あは、
調子に乗ってると殺しちゃうぞ、
すかし野郎君!」

有栖真之介

Asu Maonaka

HEADPHONE TYPE: LEFT

MAGIC SLOT: 加速スイッチ

魔剣スイッチ

「信じるのは金と自分だけ。
世界を救うとか、正直暑苦しいよ!」



「お兄ちゃんは、誰？」

「ば、馬鹿！
バカバカバカバカ！」

「通りすがりの偽善者だ。おまえを殺しにきた」

朝日桃花

Asahi Momoka

迷宮病少女

Volume 1 Color Pages

These are the color pages that were included in volume 1

The Illness of a Girl Ending the World

Long ago, my world was a very peaceful one.

Before my little sister contracted that 《Strange Disease》, it was very, very peaceful.

"I'm going to become my big brother's future bride!"

Everyday, my little sister would fool around like that and show me her dazzling smile.

But my little sister contracted an illness.

At a certain research center.

A certain treatment facility.

"Onii-chan. Onii-chan," said my little sister.

"Onii-chan..... I love you, Onii-chan."

My little sister beamed.

Despite the fact that she was smiling, her body was trembling.

Smiling, trembling.

Smiling, trembling.

Her tears were flowing.

The tears from her right eye were red.

Those from her left eye blue.

Even her left and right eyes were blue and red respectively.

"Shinnosuke! Your little sister..... Saki, she won't make it! Kill her!"

The adults behind me were screaming.

I could not move.

I could not move.

Although I was holding a knife in my right hand, I could not stab that soft flesh of my little sister.

Isn't it natural? She's my only little sister.

"Shinnosuke! Please! It's the Labyrinth Disease! If you leave it alone, the tens of thousands of humans living in this area will all die....."

His voice ended there.

Because he died.

Because he was touched by the sickness that my little sister contracted, and died.

The owner of the voice was probably my uncle. My uncle, who was researching that sickness. But he died.

My little sister killed him.

The others, the academy magicians who had come to dispose of my little sister, were also all killed.

The labyrinth was spreading from beneath my little sister's feet.

Her sickness was an abnormal sickness that gave birth to the 《Labyrinth》 in her surroundings, enveloping and changing the world.

The labyrinth was spreading in the world.

Inside the labyrinth, some unknown power or Being stirred, erasing the humans. Except me, all other humans had been swallowed up by the labyrinth, obliterated.

My little sister said with a slightly sad look, "Since they were too late in dealing with me..... the tens of thousands of people are already dead, Onii-chan."

"..... Will you, kill me too?"

She shook her head.

"Since I love you very much, Onii-chan, if it's now, I shall let you escape. But there's only about a minute left, I guess. I can only remain myself for one more minute. Farewell, Onii-chan."

The time limit was one minute.

"No. Let's escape together."

"Ah-haha, where to? The sickness is reproducing inside me. Forty more seconds."

Forty seconds.

"Saki!"

"Goodbye Onii-chan. I love you."

"I'll definitely save you....."

"Don't force yourself. I won't make it. I think I'm going to disappear....."

"No! I'll definitely save you!"

I stretched out my hand.

I desperately stretched out my hand.

I caught hold of her arm.

My little sister's eyes widened in surprise.

Both her color-changed eyes gleamed.

"Don't touch me! You'll..... you'll catch my sickness....."

"Shut up! That doesn't matter! I'm your big brother! I'm supposed to protect you! I'll definitely, save you....."

But at that moment, I could feel the sickness within my little sister invading my arm. My right arm suddenly felt heavy and languid.

"Stop!"

My little sister shouted in a shrill voice and brushed off my arm. I was sent flying. I landed headfirst and couldn't move because of the hard landing.

My little sister said with an anxious look, "..... Aah..... Aah, what should we do? You got infected with some of it. Some of the Apocalypse that's inside my head. But the time's already up. I can no longer remain myself. Bye bye, Onii-chan."

She waved. What was beneath her feet became infected by the sickness and rapidly became the labyrinth.

I cried out.

"Don't screw with me! I'll definitely..... I'll definitely save you!"

But into the darkness.

Into the labyrinth. My little sister disappeared.

And thus, I was the only one who survived.

Chapter 1 - The Transfer Student with a Bad Personality

My little sister has been gone ten years.

I'm already seventeen years old.

A high school student's summer.

A classroom.

The blazing rays of the sun.

From the balcony, the view of a common schoolyard can be seen.

The boys and girls from the normal curriculum, clad in their summer uniforms, are smiling at one another happily.

Looking at that peaceful scene, "..... The trash are living with a trashy face huh."

With half-opened eyes, I murmur sneeringly with the corner of my lip raised in a slightly sardonic manner.

As I do that, a voice from the side speaks to me.

"Who are you referring to as trash?"

It is a female voice.

"Contrary to your docile appearance, you have quite the nasty tongue huh."

I turn my eyes in the direction of the voice.

There, standing beside me, is a girl I did not know.

She is in a sailor uniform. With madder red hair and fair skin. Eyes with large irises. Perspiration lines her neck.

"Who?" I ask, to which she replies.

"Are you asking my name? Or my number?"

She asks, smiling despite being the one who called out to me.

By the way, we are on the balcony of a classroom of 『Metropolitan Kichijouji High』 in Tokyo. I am there to take a transfer interview examination.

Right now in the classroom, there are about fifteen guys and girls waiting for their names to be called.

I look into the classroom, and after ascertaining that there were still more than ten people remaining, ask "Has my name already been called?"

She smiled.

"I don't even know your name, so how would I know whether your name has been called?"

"Then why did you come out of the classroom? It's hot here, isn't it?"

"I can't deal well with air-conditioners."

"Fuuhn."

"And I'm not good with making friends either."

She gazes into the classroom with a bored look. In the classroom, students are waiting nervously for their interviews, their backs erect.

"At any rate, only a few of the people inside can enroll in the school. Besides, even after getting in a number of them will die, right?" she says suddenly.

A number of them will die.

That's right.

This is that kind of school.

But I smile and say, "So talking to me doesn't count as making friends, I guess?"

"Uhm, I'm just showing pity, I suppose?"

"Ah?"

"You don't seem like you have any friends. So I came to talk to you."

What a shitty, unnecessary favor.

I look at her in exasperation and say, "I see. Putting aside how many friends I have, at the very least I don't have the confidence of making friends with a girl like you."

"Ah-haha. You really are pretty brash despite your docile look."

"Not as much as you."

"Ah-ha."

Laughing, she stretches her hand out to me.

"I'm Kiryuu Kiri. If I manage to get in, please look out for me."

I look down with half-lidded eyes at that slender, arrogant hand that was demanding a handshake, then once again turn my eyes to the schoolyard. I take out the headphone specially used with my right ear, and affixed it.

"Hey, don't ignore me. You won't be able to make any friends with that kind of attitude you know?"

Shut up, I think, no longer bothering to reply.

Music starts flowing from my headphone. The streaming music stimulates my brain stem intensely.

As before, Ah-haha, Kiri laughs. A strange woman.

At that moment, a faint voice came from the classroom.

".....nosuke. Arisu Shinnosuke, are you here?"

No one answers. Obviously. Since Arisu Shinnosuke is my name.

From beside me, Kiri laughs with deep interest.

"Ah~, I know your name now, Shinnosuke-kun."

"....."

"Sensei is calling you. If you don't go, you might not be able to get into this school. Or is it that the music from your headphone is too loud and you can't even hear my voice?"

"My left ear is empty," I reply.

I push my back off the railing of the balcony, and open the window to the classroom.

The teacher looks at me and asked, "Are you Arisu Shinnosuke?"

"Yes."

"We're going to do your transfer interview. Come."

I nodded, and leave the classroom.

From behind, Kiri's voice rings out, "Do your best, okay~. It'd be nice if we meet again."

I'm not the least bit interested.

Ignoring her, I close the classroom door.



Nothing but a name, the Interview Room is just a normal classroom.

There are four interviewers. Men and women in their early twenties.

All four of them are seated, their pens running across what appeared to be documents on their desks.

One of them, a woman, asks me, "Your name is Arisu Shinnosuke. Seventeen. Transferring from Sangenchaya High. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

I nod.

I smirk with half-opened eyes.

Right now, I wear the school uniform of Sangenchaya High.

"During middle school, you were abroad but ——— what were you doing there?"

"I was just a rather normal middle school student."

"Haha, I don't think a rather normal middle school student would come to this school though."

"Really?"

"This is a school where you might die, you know?"

"I know."

"The students here put their lives on the line and work hard to kill young girls to save the world."

"Yes."

"Then the reason why you chose this school is because you want to save the world?"

I shake my head at that question.

"No."

"Because you are a patriot?"

"Not that."

"Then what?"

"Purely for money. Because this school pays based on ability. To be honest, I don't care about what happens to the world."

"....."

"Ah, or is it that you are looking for the passionate type? If that's the case I can also act like that, you know? Aah, I really want to save the world," I say in a monotone and the female teacher waves her hand in displeasure.

"We don't need you to do that. Answer honestly."

"Then, it's for money. Fame. Power. I have no interest in other things."

The teachers start whispering among themselves. Their pens run across the documents. Perhaps they are writing, "Someone with a terribly bad personality showed up." Or maybe it is something like, "It's really good that he's honest"?

Well, whatever it is, it doesn't matter to me.

The female teacher says, "Well then, we are going to evaluate your ability."

"Here?"

"Yes. This time, the vacancies number four. The number of people taking the test number seven hundred and twenty. Which means most will fail. Especially those who have impure motives and only have eyes for money, like you."

"Ohh. That will be problematic~"

I smirk.

The female teacher says, "Then we shall begin. Sakuma-sensei."

The male teacher whose name was called stands.

While he stands, I snap the fingers of my right hand three times. That is the activation signal for the {{Template:Arisu:HPF}}^[1] affixed in my right ear.

A roaring sound streams from my headphone.

Rhythm.

Beat.

Melody.

Along with them, the cursed song jolts my brain stem intensely.

The curse fills the area responsible for memory, and as a result of that scattering, the memories in my brain are boosted and the preparations for using magic are completed.

Sakuma-sensei or something, also sticks a headphone in his ear. Sensei's right hand lights up with purple flames.

It is a magic drawn forth by his 《Headphone Fuzz》.

As expected of Sensei.

His activation is fast.

Well, that's all there is to it though.

Sakuma-sensei grins broadly and says, "In this school, people die even during interviews."

"Is that so?"

"You might die. You have been smirking and making light of us for quite a while; that kind of attitude pisses me off."

"Haah. Sorry about that."

"Then, shall we start?"

"Sensei, please feel free to come at me."

While saying that, as if picking up the rhythm ——— as if I was waving a conductor's baton, the finger of my right hand dances in mid-air. Doing that causes three-dimensional light to swim in the air. With that light, I manipulate my 《Headphone Fuzz》.

I can load six magic songs into the 《Headphone Fuzz》 that I can select from. I select one of the available songs and activate the 'acceleration' song.

Looking at my moving finger, the female teacher cries out,
"Sakuma-sensei, be careful! This kid is using a magic art brought back from the high level 《Flash-Node Labyrinth》"

But it's already too late.

My gray matter is already filled with the song of magic.

From the headphone, the cursed piece continues to replay in my mind. Repeatedly, repeatedly, the curse is gently sung to me.

【In an instant ♪ In a flash ♪ In the time of a flash ♪

The flash of time, the flash of an instant ♪ In an instant ♪ In a flash
———】

I murmur, "..... Acceleration switch ———"

Clink, a switch flips in my body. Due to the magic activation. I can tell that my body is accelerated. I can only accelerate for one second, but that is plenty. I kick the floor. In an instant, I reach Sakuma-sensei and am right before his eyes. I take a knife out of the pocket of my uniform and place it against Sakuma-sensei's neck. I could have killed him, but...

"Oh my, did I miss the documents that would exempt me of responsibility in the event that I killed a teacher?"

Sakuma-sensei glares at me.

"Damn you....."

Ignoring him, I withdraw my knife. Kept it away.

Furthermore, I take a step back and say, "Aah, and I also brought a sharp object to school....."

The female teacher then replies, "If you need that as a weapon, then if you apply through the proper channels....."

"There won't be a problem?"

"Correct."

"Well then, I'll make the application once I'm accepted."

On hearing those words, the female teacher says, "What're you talking about? There's no way we will let a talent like you—who can overwhelm an interviewer—out of our grasp, right?"

I look at the female teacher with half-opened eyes and say, "In other words...?"

"You've passed. Welcome to 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》. Let's save the world together," says the female teacher as she extends her hand.

——— Let's save the world together.



On hearing that delightful response at my successful enrollment, I replied, "Erhm, I said this earlier, but..... I have no interest in the world so please spare me that. To be frank, it's stifling."



Upon coming out of the interview classroom, the next interviewee looks at me and says in a familiar manner, "Orh, we meet again, Shinnosuke-kun. How did it go?"

It is Kiryuu Kiri, the girl who spoke to me earlier.

I look at Kiri and answer, "Nothing special."

"You got accepted?"

"Probably, I suppose."

"As expected, you are good."

"Which part of me makes you think that it's an 'expected' thing?"

"The moronic aloofness part."

"Ah-haha, you went and said it, huh."

I laugh and smirk sardonically.

"So, is someone like you any good?"

Kiri puffs out her chest and replies, "Well~, with my beauty, if I'm no good, then I would just be a girl with only outer beauty, right?"

I look at Kiri's face. She might indeed have a face that was a little well-featured. You could call her a beauty, I suppose. And her body is slender and, to top it off, her breasts are big.

I look at that bulging chest with half-opened eyes.

"..... Aah, you'd call that a brainless big-breasted woman, I suppose?"

"Ah-ha, if you get ahead of yourself I might end up killing you, you know, Mr. Aloof Bastard."

"Ha, try me, Miss Breast-Only Woman."

I snap my fingers three times. My 《Headphone Fuzz》 activates.

At the same time, a sound also comes from Kiri's fingers. She takes out a small headphone from her pocket.

Just from that movement alone I could tell that Kiri was stronger than that Sakuma-sensei. As to whether she was stronger than me... well, that would be a different story.

Kiri grins and says.

"Just kidding. Jokes aside, I'll see you later~, Shinnosuke-kun."

She opens the door.

"I'm Kiryuu Kiri. Please look kindly on me during this interview."

The classroom disappears.

She is really a strange woman. I didn't want to see her again for all the trouble it would cost. Fail the interview, woman.

I stop the sound from the headphone. And sigh. Then turn around and continue down the corridor.

No one is in the corridor.

The school is divided into 《Normal High School Curriculum》 and 《Labyrinth Diseased Girl Killing Curriculum》, and this is the building for the 《Girl Killing Curriculum》, where people dying is a daily occurrence.

I exit the school building.

As before, the blazing rays are strong enough to make one feel faint.

The schoolyard is filled with the lively sounds of boys and girls.

The schoolyard is shared by both curricula and it was thus filled with the untroubled laughter of boys and girls reveling in their youth.

"..... Ha-ha, reveling in their youth, what fools, ain't that the truth?"

As if I were singing a cursed song, I murmur a rhyme. A dry laugh escapes me when I think of how lame my words were.

I could never understand how they could laugh without a thought in their brains, innocently and unconditionally. Somehow, it seems like ever since my little sister contracted the 《Labyrinth Disease》 and was gone from this world, I had forgotten how to laugh.

But at the very least I am sure that I'm not the only one who can no longer laugh.

The reason being, aside from taking away my smile, this bizarre and strange sickness called the 《Labyrinth Disease》 brought a dramatic change to the world, I supposed.

The sickness is defined as:

《Labyrinth Disease》

- * A strange sickness that afflicts only girls who are sixteen or younger.
 - * With herself as the center, an afflicted girl will give rise to an extra-dimensional labyrinth around her.
 - * The scale, structure, and composition of each labyrinth varies. It can take on the form of a shutdown school, an abandoned hospital, a gigantic house, plains like those in a game, et cetera. It appears to be influenced by the past personality of the infected girl.
 - * The area of effect is at least two kilometers in radius and can extend to hundreds of kilometers.
 - * If the girl in the center of the labyrinth is not killed before the enveloped area becomes anchored to the real world as an 《Eternal Labyrinth》, it becomes impossible to return the affected area to normal.
-

All these things started just ten short years ago.

The world was of course thrown into chaos.

Most of the countries that were unable to deal with the sickness had their lands transformed into 《Eternal Labyrinths》 and disappeared.

Right now, probably a quarter of the lands in the world have been turned into labyrinths. It was especially bad in the third-world countries, whose military technologies were not that advanced.

Almost all of Africa was transformed into labyrinths.

The mountainous regions of countries like Australia and China were also nothing more than labyrinths.

Even advanced countries like America, Europe, and Japan lost a number of their large cities.

But even so, the human race, tough as they are, survived.

And during that time they raided the labyrinths and brought back from within them technologies that were completely different from the modern sciences, and achieved even greater prosperity.

That new technology was, "..... magic."

In that peaceful schoolyard, I once again snap my fingers.

What humans retrieved from the labyrinths was a technology called 'Magic Converted from Labyrinth Spoils'.

Flooding the inside of a human brain with encoded sounds and vibrations, accessing the spiritual domain within the brain and drawing forth something from nothing —— was the explanation given for this new technology.

I tap the 《Headphone Fuzz》 in my right ear twice.

Depending on whether the headphone is attached to the right or left ear, the magic resounds primarily in the left or right brain respectively. I love to have my left brain jolted. I love to manipulate words to activate my magic.

Exiting the schoolyard, I see a motorbike parked on the street.

Astride the motorbike, looking at me, is a strange-looking girl who wears a white lab coat over the sailor uniform of 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》.

"Onii-sama..... how was the interview?" asks the girl.

However, it isn't like she's my little sister. She's my cousin.

Sanae Yayoi.

Fifteen years old.

A first-year at 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》.

The daughter of my uncle who had been researching the labyrinth disease.

The daughter of my uncle who died when he was caught in my little sister's sickness during its onset.

I say, "I thought I said that I don't need you to pick me up."

"But Onii-sama, you are not yet familiar with the area here."

"That's not possible, right? I was born here in Kichijouji you know?"

"That's only relevant until you were eight, isn't it? When your little sister, Saki, died, you immediately left the research faci..... home."

I stare at Yayoi with half-lidded eyes, then start walking.

Yayoi hurriedly gets off her motorbike and, pushing it, comes up onto the sidewalk close to me. Because of her petite figure, the 750 cc looks huge.

"Why are you turning your back on me? Please hop on."

"Because I told you not to come pick me up."

"No way."

"And also, Yayoi, let's get something straight."

"Eh, ah, yes."



I say to Yayoi while smirking, "To me, my little sister isn't dead. She's someone I'm going to save. That's why..... don't go spouting such nonsense. I'll kill you."

Yayoi's eyes widen in surprise. Oh no, she seemed to say. But I ignore her and walk on.

"Well, that's how it is. So don't come talk to me again~"

"..... Ah, erhm, I'm sorry. I don't really mean that."

Yayoi desperately pushes her bike alongside. Since I'm being mean, I don't relax my pace.

Being short of breath, with her chest heaving, fuuh fuuh, she goes, "I, s-spoke out of line. Regarding the research on how to save Saki, I too, am trying to get the maximum amount of cooperation possible. Onii-sama, I do understand that your infiltration into 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 is all for the sake of saving Saki."

I look down at her with half-opened eyes and smirk.

"Haha, so what if you understand? All the researchers at the facility laughed at the seven year-old me, didn't they? A girl who has turned into an 《Eternal Labyrinth》 can never be saved. Saving your little sister is just a silly thing a kid like you would say. Didn't they say things like that?"

"Those weren't my words. Besides, I was only six then. I can't remember what the adults said then."

"But that's their research policy. The country's policy."

"But that's not my policy ——— at the very least not the policy of the research lab that I'm in charge of."

I look at Yayoi once again.

Sailor uniform with a white lab coat.

At just fifteen years old, she is a genius entrusted with one of the research labs of Taikou Pharmaceuticals—famous for their research on the labyrinth disease.

Both her father and mother had been researchers at Taikou Pharmaceuticals, and she too is one.

But still, it is common knowledge that from the onset of the labyrinth disease in a patient, she definitely couldn't be saved. No, perhaps it was more like the world's policy was that they shouldn't be saved.

* At the onset of the disease in an infected girl, if she isn't killed within a limited time, the surrounding area will be permanently turned into a labyrinth. That's why she must be killed without wasting a second.

* Once a labyrinth becomes eternal, there will no longer be any way to find the girl in the labyrinth. The area and its people that have been transformed into the labyrinth can no longer return. That's why the girl must be killed without wasting a second.

This is the common knowledge that the world held.

In other words, after the onset of the disease in an infected girl, she could no longer be saved. To begin with, there isn't any research being done towards saving them.

Thus, even a company like Taikou Pharmaceuticals is primarily involved in developing 《Medicine》 or 《Magic》 to kill the girl without wasting a second.

Theirs is a completely different ideology from mine, which holds on to the foolish, childish thought of "I want to save my little sister".

Thus I shouldn't have anything in common to talk about with my cousin, who heads one of their research labs.

"Onii-sama," Yayoi says.

"I'm not your big brother."

"I adore you like a big brother."

"You are a bother."

"Onii-sama."

"You're annoying, you know?"

"Onii-sama, you traveled the world..... went around the labyrinth disease research facilities in the world, you managed to find out more about the

labyrinth disease, didn't you? I also heard that you did some considerably dangerous things for the sake of saving Saki."

"....."

"So how were the other countries? Like the way they are treating the girls whose illnesses acted up ——"

I interrupt her and say, "So, you are a spy after all? Did Taikou Pharmaceuticals order you to come and steal the intelligence I gained?"

On hearing that, Yayoi shakes her head frantically.

"I-It's nothing of the sort. I just want to be of help to you, Onii-sama."

"You are lying."

"I'm telling the truth. I..... have always been, in....."

The words stop instantly as Yayoi shuts her mouth with a troubled look, for some reason.

"What is it?"

I urge, but Yayoi shakes her head.

"It's nothing. But, please believe in....."

Cutting her off, I say, "I won't believe you. Except for myself and money, I don't believe in anything."

"Ah....."

"Are you done? Then leave."

"Please wait....."

"I won't wait. If someone sees you with me, you will lose your position. Don't talk to me again."

Yayoi's eyes go wide immediately.

"Ah, ah, could it be that your cold attitude is all for my sake....."

But still, I interrupt her.

"Not that. Don't take it wrong, idiot. It's purely because I hate you."

"That's a lie!"

"Whatever. Since I won't be seeing you again."

"Onii-sama! Allow me to prepare a place for you. So let's..... let's both think about Saki's situation and what we should do from now together....."

"You are really annoying," I say, turning around.

With a start, Yayoi quivers.

And with that, it ends.

My cousin, who is on the verge of tears.

The me who is smirking.

"Goodbye then, Yayoi. It was nice to see you."

I wave my hand and leave.



I go home ——— though even when I say that, the place I am staying at is a small hotel.

I have five pieces of luggage in my room.

The red bag contains mostly 《Headphone Fuzz》s for employing magic.

The green bag is filled with fake passports and identification documents which I use for identity fabrication in order to get into the research facilities of various countries.

The remaining bags are filled with my daily necessities. It wouldn't be a problem even if I were to lose them.

I open the green bag used for identity fabrication, which is protected by a high level of security.

Then, from the schoolbag I've been carrying, I transfer the fake documents (relating to my status as a student at Sangenchaya High and my home-stay in America during middle school) to the bag.

By the way, the truth is I went around to various research facilities in various countries. I was even once part of a secret intelligence institution where magicians were raised in inhumane ways.

"..... To think that someone like that could enter a Metropolitan school, Japan's security is really crap."

I smirk to myself.

Furthermore, the place I'm enrolled is the one burdened with the country's most classified military secrets, 《Labyrinth Diseased Girl Killing Curriculum》.

Ever since high-level magic technology was discovered in the labyrinths, the world was caught in an ongoing race of military expansion.

Be it countries.

Be it large scale corporations.

Dangerous radicals, mercenaries, terrorists, and even religious organizations were embroiled in it, gunning to be the first to get more power and technology.

Since whoever can get hold of better and more powerful magic technology will control the world.

Thus, the technologies used for clearing 《Labyrinth Diseased Girls》 possessed by each country become their most important classified secrets.

"..... Or could it be that they were already done with investigating my background?"

Saying that, I take the headphone out of my right ear. What I had been wearing was a 《Headphone Fuzz》 which could be found anywhere and easily handled by anyone.

General purpose, type 2 《Headphone Fuzz》 ———

If I were asked to comment, I'd say such were popular among the brainless magicians who could only be found in a peaceful place without advanced training... like Japan. The one that Sakuma-sensei used was just such a headphone.

However, with these I wouldn't be able to employ the complicated magic that I love and often use. I throw the general purpose type 2 headphone into the red bag roughly and take out a 《Headphone Fuzz》 which has luminous green and black as its base colors.

General purpose type 1 —— a headphone made out to be activated by a totally different mechanism.

It is a German 《Headphone Fuzz》 called 《Willer Corp. Manufactured Prototype 42》 .

Due to the fact that it places an overly large burden on the body and mind, it never entered production, but I loved it. I loved using it to simulate my brain to the point of almost wrecking it.

I put the headphone in my ear and closed my bag. That is all I need to do. With this, I would probably be able to deal with any threat that comes assaulting me. At least, I had always been able to before.

I sit on the bed, and look at the door to my room. If my real identity was found out, and if my real purpose was discovered on top of that, then it wouldn't be strange for 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 to set assassins on me, but —— it doesn't seem to be the case.

"Ha, haha."

I laugh thinly and lay down on the bed, looking up at the ceiling.

"Like I thought, they are all trash."

At that moment, my cell phone rings. I take it out from my pocket and press the 'accept' button. A voice sounds through my headphone.

"Who is it?" I said, and the voice of the caller belongs to the female interviewer from earlier.

"Even the way you answer a phone call is rude, isn't it, Arisu Shinnosuke-kun?"

"Well, I never thought that I would receive a call from Sensei. So how may I help you?"

"Classes start tomorrow so please come to school."

"Where to?"

"The 《Girl Killing Curriculum》 building, class 5."

"Class 5..... I understand. Anything else?"

"Sakuma-sensei was outraged at you treating him like a fool."

"Who cares about that."

"Ah-haha. Your mouth really stinks."

"No, no. It's not my mouth but my personality that stinks, Sensei."

I hang up the phone.

Classes start tomorrow.

Classes for the sake of killing sick girls like my little sister.

I look up at the ceiling with half-opened eyes, and murmur to myself, ".....
Well, I've finally returned to Japan, Saki."



The next day.

Was a transfer student's first day, filled with excitement and anticipation.

I walk, smirking.

Silence greets me at school.

In the corridor.

Looking up at the plate with 《Girl Killing Curriculum Class 5》 on it, my feet halt.

The time is 8:15 AM.

The morning homeroom started at 8:10 AM so I was, without a doubt, late. I heard that transfer students should go to their classrooms a little late. Since during the morning homeroom, the teacher would want to announce that there would be a new transfer student and introduce me, it seemed. But well, it should be a good time now, I suppose.

I open the door to the classroom.

Take a step forward.

The students in the classroom number twenty.

It doesn't seem like there are an equal number of guys and girls. Perhaps, the number of girls might be a little bit more.

While a 《Headphone Fuzz》's power was also determined by the user's sensitivity to the cursed song, according to a certain research paper I saw from somewhere, girls are a little more sensitive than guys in that respect. Though since I'm not a girl, I'm not the least bit interested in that research so I don't really know the details.

The students look at me.

Following that, the person who appears to be the homeroom teacher —— actually the female interviewer from yesterday, turns her gaze on me.

She seems to be around twenty-two. Deep blue suit. High heels. A 《Headphone Fuzz》 which resembles an earring in her left ear. It seems like she's one who likes to stimulate her right brain. An emotion-type. She is stronger than Sakuma-sensei, I suppose?

"Hi, Arisu Shinnosuke-kun. Welcome to my class."

"This is your class, huh?"

"Ah-ha, I can't have you coming into the classroom with that manner of speaking....."

"So this is your class, huh, Sensei? I'm really honored."

The female teacher's lips, lightly painted in pink, curl up into a grin and she says, "I'm Honjou Tsukasa. Twenty-one. It's okay not to address me as Sensei, so you can call me Tsukasa-chan ♪."

"Yes, Sensei."

"You really are an unpleasant guy. Well then, let me introduce the new transfer student. This kid is Arisu Shinnosuke-kun. He's transferring into our school from the normal curriculum of Sangenchaya High. Despite that, as a magician, his skills, learned from heaven knows where, are not too shabby and he probably won't be a burden when it comes to clearing labyrinths. He's only interested in money and fame and power, according

to himself. During the interview, I was really surprised to meet a piece of trash who had the audacity to declare that openly. Well, do you have anything you want to add?"

I say, "Nothing in particular."

"Then, you don't need to introduce yourself anymore?"

"If that's okay."

"Well, in that case, it's not. Please introduce yourself."

My expression clouds, and I look at the students with half-opened eyes. By now, I was already done checking the faces of most of the students.

Eight guys.

Twelve girls.

All of them had a headphone in either their right or left ear. Obviously. If you don't have a 《Headphone Fuzz》 here, you can't do a single thing.

Such headphone-type magic activating devices were special devices whose use was only granted to individuals belonging to either the military or police organizations in Japan, or those who were tasked to raid 《Labyrinths》 .

Individuals who were not granted permission were forbidden from using them.

They are treated like guns from before (though in the present day, the military does not use weapons from the previous era like guns), except that their power is on a different level from guns. Their versatility is different. The operating subtleties are different. Since they are packed with a genocidal amount of power that can create major incidents if they are mishandled.

Thus, they are heavily restricted devices. The civilians are only allowed to use magic technologies employed in consumer electronics or other manufactured goods. Even for the military, their headphones are adjusted to a level usable by the majority.

Therefore, the only ones allowed to employ magic that can forcibly stimulate their brains almost to their limits are a small portion of the elite, each tagged with an ID number and officially controlled by the country.

And even among such elites, only the considerably talented ones were allowed to enroll in a place like 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》.

Elites.

"..... elites, huh."

With half-opened eyes, I smile faintly to the elites gathered in this classroom. Then gave a simple introduction of myself.

"..... it's troubling when I'm suddenly asked to say something about myself but —— just as said, I'm trash. I just want to become a lowly member at the edge of the class, so please don't concern yourself with me too much."

A few of them appear uninterested in me.

A few of them appear to dislike me.

A few of them, who looked like goody-goodies, direct a pleasant, friendly gaze at me.

And I have zero interest in any of them.

Honjou Tsukasa-sensei says, "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Then sit down. In the empty seat."

The empty seat is located in the last row beside the window.

And the top of that desk is decorated with a flower that appears to be mourning the dead.

It probably isn't intended as harassment of the transfer student, I suppose.

The person who originally sat in that seat had probably died.

It was a flower placed for that deceased.

This was that kind of school.

I sit at my desk.

I look down at the flower with half-opened eyes, and gently put the vase containing that flower down on the floor.

I can feel the gazes of a few people turning hard. Were they the friends of the person who used to sit here?

But, that doesn't matter. Since we aren't here to have fun.

I narrow my eyes.

And look out the window.

Once again in the schoolyard, the Normal Curriculum students are having fun preparing for their P.E lesson. Not one among them wears a headphone. It isn't because a headphone would interfere with their P.E lesson.

It was because they aren't allowed to use one.

Or, they aren't interested in absurd things like 'putting their lives on the line and killing girls that bring forth extra-dimensional labyrinths'.

That is indeed a wise choice, I think.

Since Even if I can't become strong, someone will protect me: parents, school, or the local government.

Or, Even if I can't save the world, someone will save the world: the country, the military, or corporations.

In that case, putting my life on the line and becoming a magician is an idiotic thing to do —— I can understand that kind of reasoning.

Thus, this was a classroom where idiots known as elites were gathered.

A classroom with a bunch of morons trying desperately, risking their lives using magic, while others lived peaceful, tranquil, ordinary, happy lives.

Sensei says, "Well then, this concludes our homeroom. Shinnosuke-kun, while waiting for lessons to start, take the time to read through the school handbook."

I look up, then open my bag. And take out a reasonably thick booklet.

Metropolitan Kichijouji High

《Labyrinth Diseased Girl Killing Curriculum》 —— School Handbook

The contents of the handbook are:

- * Metropolitan Kichijouji High is an institution established by the government, with the approval of the country, for the purpose of dealing with labyrinth-diseased patients at the onset of their illness.
- * This school deals primarily with clearing age-limited labyrinths, which can only be infiltrated by those who are nineteen years or under.
- * It is primarily entrusted with dealing with cases occurring in Kantou region. (In the event that the labyrinths which appear in North-East range, Central range, or **Kinki** range are too much for their respective high schools to handle, there's a possibility that we will be deployed there.)
- * In the event that infected girls having an onset of their diseases appear, the cooperating research center attached to the school will immediately send their researchers to begin investigations of the labyrinth brought forth by the diseased girl. (The main cooperating research center currently is Taikou Pharmaceuticals.)
- * The investigation focuses on:
 - * The girl's personality.
 - * The structure (map) of the labyrinth brought forth by the girl.
 - * The obstacles inside (enemies, traps).
 - * The girl's weak point.
 - * The time limit before the girl becomes an 《Eternal Labyrinth》 and envelops and anchors the surrounding area with the labyrinth.
- * In parallel, the school charged with dealing the target girl will conduct a lesson/lecture covering the investigation's results for the students of the 《Girl Killing Curriculum》.
- * In most of the cases, the time limit for such a lesson about the labyrinth girl is five hours.
- * In the last hour, infiltration of the labyrinth to deal with the girl will take place.
- * In those six hours (in total), everyone should work together and, with the resultant increased efficiency, kill the girl and save the world.

Please do your best.

Well, that was basically what the handbook was about.

I smirk and murmur, "Work Together, huh."

I drop the handbook onto the desk with a thud.

Before I knew it, the homeroom was long over and more than half of the break-time that followed had passed while I was reading the handbook.

Then I realize that a number of students are crowding around at a distance, looking at me.

The atmosphere coming from them is tense, yet lukewarm.

From among them, one person comes forward.

She is a slender, petite girl about 150 cm tall. Her beautiful blond hair is tied up into a ponytail. However, it doesn't look like it was dyed. Her natural hair color. Her eyes are pale blue. With fair skin. I wonder, is she a mixed-blood? Her eyes radiate a strong spirit. Her 《Headphone Fuzz》 is in her left ear.

In other words, she is an emotion-type.

A genius type.

A type that is hard to deal with.

The girl points straight at me and says, "Hey transfer student, I shall now tell you the rules of this classroom."

See, she's hard to deal with.

I look at her with half-opened eyes and smile.

"Aah, that'll be a life-saver. I'm kind of disconcerted by a new classroom."

However, ignoring me, the girl folds her arms against the chest area of her sailor uniform, which hardly bulges, and speaks. Raising her sharp, pointed chin arrogantly like she doesn't care.

"First, you must know the most important thing of this school. And that's me. My name is Mizuiro Gunjou. I have the best grades in the school year and the boss of this class."

"Hehyh, Boss-san huh."

"I have already cleared labyrinths twice without dying, killed the labyrinth diseased girls and saved the world."

"Fuuhn."

"Furthermore, I have raided eternal labyrinths four times and succeeded in bringing back 'Magic Converted from Labyrinth Spoils' without dying."

"Ah, that's amazing."

Four times.

She had raided eternal labyrinths four times.

That really was an amazing thing.

By the way, I have already raided eternal labyrinths seven hundred and twenty-four times ——— but, I don't feel the need to say that. Since it was a number I could achieve at places where inhumane activities took place thanks to the mad scientists and powerful people of small countries who went berserk, which resulted in me raiding labyrinths on a daily basis without even any safety gear and I had to keep using magic at levels which could have ripped my brain to pieces while in the labyrinths.

Thus, in a peaceful, safe, quiet country like Japan, for a person the same age as me to have raided eternal labyrinths four times, she would be quite competent, I suppose. Since compared to diseased girl labyrinths that still had a time limit, eternal labyrinths are much more dangerous and the chances of dying in them is high.

In other words, this girl is competent and managed to bring back 'Magic Converted from Labyrinth Spoils' alive. Then, it wouldn't be strange if she was a super star with a number of corporate sponsors ——— at the moment I think about that, Gunjou speaks.

"It's not something I need to be proud of, but I currently have 7 corporate sponsors supporting me."

She is pretty openly proud of that. More like she gives no signs of trying to hide her brimming confidence and puffs her chest out. The size of her chest couldn't quite match up to the magnitude of her confidence, it seems.

With that, I knew what kind of person she is.

A haughty, impulsive idiot.

But... well, she must be pretty rich if she has seven corporations backing her. She should also be well-connected among the rich. Even if she is capable of getting results, to have such connections at her age, she might possibly belong to the higher echelons of society.

Her high class 《Headphone Fuzz》 is proof of that.

《Mitsutomo Heavy Industries Made · Water-Death Type 1》.

One can tell from the name that it is Japanese-made.

"..... so?"

On hearing my words, Gunjou just says, "You don't get it?"

"In other words, in order for commoners like you all to survive, you have no choice but to follow me. A genius like me. This is the only rule. Get it?"

Gunjou stretched her fair hand out.

"Don't tell me that you want me to grab your hand?"

A smile then surfaces on Gunjou's face.

"I want you to humble yourself and subordinate yourself to me. Most of the class are under my command ——— they survived because of my protection."

"Hehyh. I see."

"Or are you going to make an enemy out of me? Like him?"

Gunjou points her finger at the corner of the classroom.

Directly opposite from my seat, the last row of the classroom. The seat before the door.

A guy with gray hair sits there. He has sharp eyes. The color of his irises is a little strange. They are red. A cold red. Those red orbs look at me.

"It's not like I'm making an enemy out of you though?"

"You are, aren't you? You don't want to come under my protection and kept interfering with me, Hishiro Shiro."

Gunjou speaks the guy's name.

Hishiro Shiro ——— seems like it's this guy's name. Despite his red eyes, his name is 'White(Shiro)'. What kind of joke is this?

Shiro too had a 《Headphone Fuzz》 in his left ear. Hey hey, is this class full of emotion-types?

He is using a 《ROLAND Corporation Special Use Type 0》 . Japanese-made. It isn't anything special but it is hard to handle and no simple thing. If he had it modified, then he would be a force to be reckoned with.

Shiro says, "Hah, anyone who doesn't listen to you is an enemy? Queen-sama."

Gunjou spreads both hands and smiles.

"That's right. Useless ordinary people should just follow me obediently."

Dohn, while remaining seated, Shiro kicks the desk of the neighboring student. The student whose desk got kick quivers with a start.

"WTF. We haven't determined who's better yet."

"I thought it would be obvious from our grades..... or do you want to have a go for real? I don't really mind though."

In an instant, snap snap snap sounds ring out from both their fingers.

Their 《Headphone Fuzz》 s are activated.

Their movements are incredibly fast.

It seems their strength isn't just big talk.

The classroom tenses.

No one can move from the murderous intent flowing out from them.

It looks like the entire class revolves around the two of them.

It really is something I wasn't interested in.

"..... well, just go ahead and do what you want."

Both of them are just trash that stands out.

I stand up. Start out of the classroom, completely ignoring what is happening.

"Hold it right there."

"Stop."

Both Shiro and Gunjou speak at the same time. Which reminds me, Gunjou's name is also a color. White(Shiro) and Ultramarine(Gunjou). What color will you get if you mix them together?



Gunjou says, "You haven't said who you are going to follow."

Shiro says, "..... your aloof attitude also pisses me off hey."

They are really troubling people. This really is a classroom where a bunch of moronic elites, isolated from the world, are risking their lives to save the world.

I smirk with half-opened eyes.

"Don't bully the nervous transfer student, please."

"Then come under my wing."

"Forget about her. If you prove useful, I'll protect you."

"Haha, I'm sure popular. Don't tell me my time has come? Then, how about this? I'm really a whore on the inside, so whoever pays more, I'll join that person. Now, bid to your heart's content."

""Wha!?"""

Both of them look at me with slightly surprised faces.

"Ah-hahaha."

Laughing, I walk out of the classroom.

I can hear the raging voice of Gunjou from the classroom.

"A great person like me even came to talk to you, what's with that attitude!? Everyone, just ignore that fellow! Ignore him completely!"

On hearing that, Shiro laughs.

"Ha, hahaha, the rich girl is getting angry for being made fun of."

"You are also being ridiculed, aren't you! I'll kick your ass!!"

"Try me, bitch!"

I gradually put distance between me and that meaningless conversation.

Along the corridor.

The ten-minute break is already over. The students start going back to their respective classes. Down the corridor stands the girl I met during the school transferring interview.

Kiryuu Kiri.

A 《Headphone Fuzz》 is in her right ear.

A left brain type.

The type who manipulates magic rationally.

Different from before, she is now wearing the sailor uniform of 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》. It seems she was also accepted into this school, which makes things bothersome.

"Yaahh, we meet again, Mr. Aloof Bastard."

"Who are you? I don't remember you at all."

"Liar liar. You reacted to my face, and your eyes immediately dropped down to my breasts right? Big pervert."

On hearing her words, I do what she said, and look at her breasts with half-opened eyes. I stare at her breasts, bulging fully against her clothes.

"Hey, I'll be embarrassed if you keep looking at them," she covers her breasts with her arms from my relentless gaze and says poutingly.

"Eh, but I'm a pervert right?"

"Jeez, your personality is bad as usual. Did you manage to make any friends?"

"Of course. Roughly about hundred people."

"This school has five classes of twenty students each, so there should only be a hundred people in total though."

"Aah, in other words, I'm friends with everyone except you? Sorry, I just couldn't click well with your physiology."

"Ah-haha. Should I kill you, jeez."

Her words, unlike Gunjou, are probably a joke. Those who wear 《Headphone Fuzz》 s in their right ear wouldn't be swayed by a moment of emotion.

"But seriously, it won't do if you don't make any friends. Once you enter a labyrinth, you won't make it alone," Kiri says.

"Hehyh, I see. I didn't know."

"I'm not kidding, a lone wolf will die, you know?"

"Then, did you manage to make any friends?"

Kiri grins.

"Of course, with my beauty."

"Shut up."

"Ah-haha. Well well, let's both work hard. I'm in class 3 so our infiltration points in the labyrinth might be different but the goal is the same, so do look out for me when we meet there."

"I don't want to."

"Here we go again."

Ignoring her, I start walking.

And pass by Kiri.

She turns around and asks, "What about classes?"

"Skipping."

"Eehh, maybe I should skip too?"

"Do as you like. But, don't come near me."

"Ah-ha, even though you are just a lonesome kid~"

"....."

Feeling gloomy, I no longer reply.

She was probably making friends. Calling out to potentially strong talents, and then in times of danger in the labyrinth, she would be able to get their help, I suppose.

Though I have no idea why she would think that I was strong ——— maybe she knows my true identity to a certain extent. While a little investigation wouldn't reveal much about me, if she actually belongs to

some intelligence institution overseas, and I had clashed with the said organization, then the possibility of her knowing who I am was not zero.

I turn around for a moment.

And narrow my eyes at Kiryuu Kiri's back.

Then I begin to consider the possibility that she's an agent of another organization. It is possible.

Because, even when compared to the other labyrinths in the world, there is an abnormally special 《Eternal Labyrinth》 under the influence of this 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》, which was surely mining special types of magic technology from it.

I shift my gaze. To the wall opposite the classroom along the corridor.

Beyond the wall is the back of the school.

Behind this school lay a 50 km radius 《Eternal Labyrinth》.

Each 《Eternal Labyrinth》 has its own code-name as well as a ranking to differentiate one from another.

The harder it is to return alive from a raid, the higher the ranking, and it ranges from 0 ~ 666.

—— Angel 121

—— Flames 65

—— Flash-node 10

—— Water-Death 7

And so on and so forth.

At present, humans are able to clear a rank 12 labyrinth with no casualties. Beyond that rank, deaths would definitely occur. Or the raiders might have to retreat before getting their hands on any kind of technology.

However, the higher the rank of a labyrinth, the higher the level of magic technology that slept in it, and anyone would want to raid a high level labyrinth and bring back its technology.

And behind this 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》, ten years ago, the hardest labyrinth in the world appeared and lay there.

The labyrinth was coveted by military-affiliated personnel around the world —— but, it was at an overwhelming, ultimate level of difficulty where no one had brought back anything.

By the way, the name of the girl who came down with the 《Labyrinth Disease》 and became the 《Eternal Labyrinth》 of this Kichijouji, was ——

Arisu Saki.

The code-name of the labyrinth is Apocalypse.

Its rank is 666.

《Apocalypse 666》 —— is its official name but, in truth, this isn't what it's called.

The name of the girl who came down with the disease was Arisu. And, the raiders who returned were as good as none. From these two points, to parody the world where one would easily be lost and find it hard to return from in the famous story of 『Alice in Wonderland』, at some point in time, the labyrinth was dubbed:

《Apocalypse Alice》 ——

In other words, my little sister is managed by this 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 for its own interests.

"....."

I further narrow my half-opened eyes, but say nothing.

And at the same time, the bell rings.

The break is over.

Biih Biih Biih, a siren-like sound rings throughout the school.

"What a strange bell," I mutter. To which Kiri, who is a short distance away, speaks. Her expression is, for some reason, tense.

"Shinnosuke-kun, did you properly read the handbook? This isn't the bell."

"Hn?"

"This is the sound to signal the appearance of a diseased girl."

"Wha....."

My eyes widen slightly as I look at Kiri.

The siren continues.

"This is an announcement to the students of the Girl Killing Curriculum. Please return to the classroom ASAP. A labyrinth diseased patient has appeared in Kanagawa Prefecture. We'll begin the lesson in killing the girl."

Kiri starts running.

"Let's postpone the skipping of classes. I'm going back to the classroom. And, also, please really look out for me over there. Let's work hard together to kill the girl."

As Kiri is about to pass me by, she stretches out her hand to hi-five me.

——— Let's work hard together to kill the girl.

I don't return her hi-five.

"Haha, as expected, your personality is really bad."

I don't want to hear that from someone who talks about killing girls, I thought but didn't say.

I too turn around and head back to my classroom. Just at about the same time, Honjou-sensei is about to enter the classroom, with a thick stack of documents in her hands.

They are probably documents on the diseased girl in Kanagawa Prefecture.

The profile of the girl.

Her interests and hobbies.

About the labyrinth brought forth by the girl.

The results of the investigation by the researchers and scouting corps are all there.

I ask, "Sensei..... what's the name and age of the girl?"

It'll be a bummer if the diseased girl is the same age as my little sister, I think.

Sensei answers, "That kind of thing doesn't matter! Anyhow, you have to kill the girl. We only have six hours so hurry back into the classroom!"

Dohn, she knocks on the door to the classroom.

"Now, quickly kill the girl and save the world!"

I enter the classroom.

Kill the girl and save the world.

I look at her with half-opened eyes,

"Hahh..... this world is really disgusting."

In a low voice, I mutter as I smirk.

Chapter 2 - The Lesson in Killing the Girl

The lesson from which we will be learning about the girl has finally started.

No one in the classroom is reeling with joy.

Naturally.

Once we invade the labyrinth, we will be facing the danger of dying.

Furthermore, if we fail to kill the diseased girl, be it wherever it is, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people around the girl with her as the radial point, will die.

Thus, there are two things that are of utmost importance.

- * The level of difficulty in clearing the labyrinth.
- * The number of people in the area of the labyrinth.

I turn to the first page of the document where 《Target Girl's Profile》 is written on the cover page. This is what it says.

Her name is Asahi Momoka.

Fourteen years old.

Third year in Miyasaka Middle School.

Family members --- father, mother, little sister.

Quite popular in school.

No boyfriend.

Location of disease onset --- at this moment, my expression stiffens a little for the first time. I feel a slight shiver of fear along my back.

Location of disease onset ---

『Kanagawa Prefecture, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Ward』

A tight smile surfaces on my face and I say.

"..... haha, don't screw with me. Right out of the gate, you're telling me that the disease onset happened right in the middle of a city with three million people?"

In other words, if we fail, at least tens of thousands of people will vanish. If the effective radius is large, at most more than three million people could die.

Dohn, Honjou-sensei taps on the blackboard.

"Who said you can start reading the documents!? Arisu Shinnosuke! Stop right now!"

I look up and shrug my shoulders. I can tell that even Sensei is nervous.

The other students indeed have yet to start flipping the pages of the documents. Seems like there are several rules governing the progress of the lesson.

After ascertaining that I have stopped reading, Sensei continues.

"First, as always, I'll give an overview of the overall situation.

The discovery of the girl having an onset of the labyrinth disease took place three hours ago.

After the scouting corps had sent out their men, it was just two hours ago by the time they found out that the labyrinth brought forth by the girl is an age-limited labyrinth.

Aah wait, we have a transfer student. Shinnosuke, do you understand the meaning of age-limited labyrinths?"

Of course, there is no way I would not know that.

An age-limited labyrinth is one with a rule that only allows people who are below a certain age to enter. That is why an organization like 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 where kids are gathered to risk their lives exists.

I acknowledge with my hand to show that I do not need any explanation on that, and Sensei continues.

"Then, I shall continue.

The task of exterminating the girl, is assigned to us, 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》, who are unsurpassed in clearing age-limited labyrinths in Japan, and the collation of information specially for our use started exactly thirty minutes ago.

And, the time limit left before the diseased girl turns into an 《Eternal Labyrinth》 is six hours.

In other words, we'll learn about the labyrinth brought forth by the girl in the first five hours, and efficiently kill the girl in the remaining hour, which is what we always do. Is everyone following so far?"

Gunjou then raises her hand.

Sensei then asks.

"What is it? Mizuiro Gunjou."

Gunjou replies.

"I think this is a waste of time. The explanation is already sufficient, isn't it? A genius like me will be participating. Therefore, we'll definitely succeed in killing the girl anyway."

"Ah-ha, as usual, you're brimming with confidence. Well, you did earn the place of the best labyrinth raider twice though. But, this time round, we have a transfer student ---"

Gunjou shoots a glare in my direction. When I meet her gaze, she turns away. Is she a kid?

"I don't think that piece of newly transferred trash will be of much use!"

"Ah-hahaha. What's with that? Did something happen between the two of you?"

"Nothing happened!"

"You'll die if you don't get along, you know ~? If you relax for even an instant....."

"A genius like me would never let my guard down!"

Sensei looks at Gunjou and nods.

"Well, we don't have much time and I'm not going to waste time mediating a fight between kids. At any rate, the time limit is six hours. Let's continue with our class. Well, turn to the first page of your documents. I'll say this first. The level of difficulty of this labyrinth isn't high --- according to the investigation, it's about rank 0.4. So if you keep up with what you guys have been doing, you should be able to clear it easily. As long as you don't let your guard down and be full of yourself like that idiot Gunjou, it'll be a walk in the park."

"Hey, Sensei! Who are you calling idiot Gunjou!"

Gunjou raises her voice again, but Sensei ignores her and continues.

"Understand? Please keep that in mind. Now turn to the first page."

In order to quell the students' fear at the fact that the location of the disease onset is right in the middle of a city with three million people, Sensei is assertively hard-selling them on the low level of difficulty of the labyrinth.

By the way, for some reason, the difficulty level of clearing labyrinths has been low in most cases. Thus, if the investigation has been properly done, and the raiders have a map and a grasp of what can be found inside and their respective locations, then it will not be difficult to deal with it.

As such, the problem with dealing with the diseased girl is a matter of the time limit.

Because of the time limit problem, there were cases where even easy labyrinths were not cleared in time.

That being said, when investigation was not properly conducted and the raiding took place right away, things such as taking the wrong route, or getting hindered by monsters that were spawned for the purpose of protecting the diseased girl, all led to the loss of time.

The problem has to be the time limit.

And running out of time resulting in failure to clear a labyrinth is inexcusable.

As the impact of such a failure is completely different from the failure of bringing back new magic technology from raiding 《Eternal Labyrinths》.

Things such as all the raiders dying and unable to thus clear a labyrinth, or when the raiders escaping because they cannot clear it in time due to the hindrances, are not allowed.

If they fail, the people in that area, which can number from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, will all die.

This is no laughing matter.

That is why the sequence of 'labyrinth investigation → education → infiltration + raiding' is treated with importance.

Even if only one hour is left for the raid, if the raiders have a good grasp of the information concerning the labyrinth before raiding it, then the success rate of clearing it will be much higher --- thus, the given sequence is a result of the experience accumulated by various countries after killing countless diseased girls in the past.

By the way, if a diseased girl turns completely into an 《Eternal Labyrinth》, then the difficulty of raiding it will be upped by at least ten times.

In other words, if the target girl this time were not killed, she would probably become an 《Eternal Labyrinth》 with rank 4.

But well, that does not matter.

Right now, we are in the middle of the lesson from we will learn how to kill the girl, for the sake of saving the lives of three million people.

As expected, a buzz began in the classroom the instant the documents were turned.

"Yo-Yokohama.....? Seriously?"

"I-If we fail in this....."

Started the students among themselves, but at that moment, Gunjou stands up, and snaps the fingers on her right hand twice.

"All right everyone. Don't get swayed by just this, will you? It's only rank 0.4 right? You guys know that I have raided a rank 10 《Eternal Labyrinth》 and brought back its magic technology right? This is below a tenth of that. We can clear it before we've even finished breathing. If you all would follow me, no one will die, so rest assured."

With that, the classroom goes quiet.

It seems like Gunjou is really well-trusted by the class. Only someone like Hishiro Shiro is unhappy with her.

Well, if what Gunjou said was true, that she had succeeded in raiding an 《Eternal Labyrinth》 of rank 10, then she is a pretty high level magician even by world standards. Clearing a rank 0.4 labyrinth will be a walk in the park.

As if to flaunt about her charismatic personality, Gunjou looks at me, grins and says.

"..... now, rest easy and let's continue with the lesson. This time too, under my leadership, this class shall kill the girl!"

She sits down in her chair triumphantly.

With that, once again, our lesson resumes.

『First Hour ---Please learn about the profile of the girl』

The lesson was a simple one.

We learned about the identity of that fourteen year old girl.

Who her first love was.

The friends she hung out with, teased around with.

She knew that the world became what it is today as a result of strife and that she should not be living with a carefree attitude.

But in the end, whatever she did, she was able to live a quiet, daily life in this peaceful country called Japan.

Provided of course, that she never got tangled up with the 《Labyrinth Disease》. However.

No one knew the reason behind how she contracted the 《Labyrinth Disease》. While there is a research paper saying that there are many children who let a darkness from another world seep into their hearts, nobody knows how true that is.

At the very least, Saki --- my little sister, did not appear to have any kind of darkness in her heart. She was always smiling happily everyday, having fun and fooling around, always tagging along with me.

But still, she got tangled up with the 《Labyrinth Disease》 .

Of course, the rest of the surviving family was troubled. Parents, siblings thought about it. Was there something inside her that they did not notice? If they had noticed it, maybe she would not have come down with the disease perhaps? And blamed themselves for it.

The target girl this time, 『Asahi Momoka』 , loved school.

She was a popular person in school.

She loved soft toys and had a collection of them.

Thus, the labyrinth she created has a form that resembled a 『School』 .

A gigantic closed down school with multiple levels.

The number of levels above ground and the number of levels below ground are still undergoing investigation.

But, it appears to look like a school.

As expected, a great number of soft toys are patrolling the school; those soft toys appear to be diseased, and would probably attack any infiltrators they find in order to protect their mistress.

There are also a lot of other data about the girl. Like the mother got her license suspended due to speeding at a certain age, or the father's nickname in his workplace, and so forth, data like these that do not matter have been made public to us.

However, she was apparently more or less brought up in a happy environment.

And thus, while my classmates are reading through the documents that contain all these private information as if she had lost all privacy rights, the first hour passes by quickly.



We got a ten minute break.

Some went to the toilet.

Some are revising the material they studied in the first hour.

Some are talking among their friends.

"....."

But everyone shares a thing in common, which is, all of them are ignoring me.

Probably on Mizuiro Gunjou's order.

Gunjou shoots a glance at me. "Now you know? You know huh? How is it how is it?" is written all over her face. "It's about time to start listening to me and prostrate to me." Her expression is really easy to read.

That easy-to-read face is a little adorable.

I smirk with half-opened eyes, and Gunjou puffs out her cheeks, glaring at me. She seems to be getting increasingly angry. Really just a kid.

Well, that does not matter anyway.

I sigh out, then rest my chin in my hand as I stare vacantly out the window.

And then, a voice calls out from behind.

"Hey, the kid who's being bullied."

The voice of Hishiro Shiro.

I did not turn around.

"Don't ignore me."

Gahn, my desk got kicked. My chin-resting-in-hand form breaks.

"Oh my."

I turn around and look at Shiro with half-opened eyes.

His cold, sharp, red eyes are looking down at me.

"Isn't it horrible to kick the desk of the bullied kid? You might get suspended from school, you know?"

Shiro takes up the seat beside me on his own, and looks away. Looking at the blackboard, he tilts his chair.

"What the hell do you want?"

I ask, to which Shiro says.

"What're you going to do?"

"Like I said, about what?"

"Once you enter the labyrinth, you won't be able to survive on your own, you know? Those who have no friends die."

"Oh, I see. So?"

"Since you have no friends, you will just die like that."

"Eh? You're kidding me? I thought I'm friends with everyone in the class though ~"

"Shut up, moron."

"Ah-haha, ha."

I laugh.

After glaring at me with his sharp, red eyes, Shiro holds out his hand in slight embarrassment and says.

"I'll protect you, so join me."

I look down at that hand and say.

"Is that a request from a friend? Oh my, I'm a little embarrassed when you are being so straight at it."

"Like I said, shut up. There's no time for jokes. There are only four hours before we invade the labyrinth."

"Yeah, that's right."

"Right now, my team has three people. If you join, we'll have four people, and we'll be able to kill the diseased girl before Gunjou."

"Ah ~, I see. You're losing because you don't have enough people? So, even when the fate of the world hinges on it, you guys are competing for some foolish pride?"

However, Shiro did not bite on my provocation.

"No. It's because we'll probably get a bonus payout for killing the diseased girl. With that, we'll be able to get better equipment, and get our hands on more magic technology as well. The strong get stronger, the weak ones die. Thus, there's a need to win."

It is as he said.

In this peaceful Japan, this place, a school that battles with the 《Labyrinth Disease》, is a stark contrast.

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes and ask.

"But why are you trying to become strong?"

"....."

"You can go on with life even if you don't become strong right? See, look at the schoolyard. Look at the ordinary guys and girls who're experiencing things like romance and fun times in their P.E lessons. And yet, what is it that you seek beyond power? Why did you enroll into this school? Into this, school where you might just die."

Normally, one would not enroll into such a school.

Most of the people who enter such schools generally fall into a few categories.

- * As a form of debt repayment.

- * Since their parents happen to part of the JDSF or military-affiliated personnel, they just happen to enroll.

- * A desire for power no matter what.

- * A desire for money no matter what.

* Wanting to save the world no matter what.

Basically these.

And, those who will survive to become stars, usually belong to the last, 'Wanting to save the world' category.

When they have such an aberrant goal, they will be able to find an exceptionally strong willpower that is not normally found in others. Thus, usually, the ones who have ambitions which others make fun of, are the ones who will become strong.

What Honjou-sensei said during the interview was the truth. People with impure motives are, after all, weak in their wills and thus unable to survive.

I wonder which is the case with Shiro.

"Do you want to save the world that much?"

I ask, to which Shiro's eyes narrow.

"How about you?"

"Why should I babble about myself to a stranger like you?"

"Huh? Then, there's also no need for me to tell....."

Cutting him off, I say.

"You want me to become your friend right? And you want to beat Gunjou. Then, you should just start with revealing about yourself for now."

"....."

Shiro throws me a sharp glare.

"..... all right, very well. But you are going to join me after listening to me, get it?"

I smirk.

Then, Shiro gazes at me in melancholy and begins.

"My big brother went to this school. To repay my parents' debts."

One of the common reasons.

"My big brother died, and the debts were absolved. Our family was thus freed. But I heard that big brother was being used in some kind of experiment."

"....."

"I made an inquiry to 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 to find out what it was about, but they never came back to me. They didn't even return his body to us. Well, if he had died in a labyrinth and if his body was lost as result, then it couldn't be helped. But, there were many suspicious points. Thus, I started my own investigation."

"..... hmm. In other words, it's for revenge?"

I ask, and Shiro looks back at me.

"Who knows? Well, let's just start with that. Without power, I can't protect anyone."

I agree with that. And then, a small thought comes to me. I wonder whether what Shiro had experienced and is seeking for could be the same as mine. The part where we both had a family member who was at the mercy of the 《Labyrinth Disease》 .

That is of course provided that everything Shiro had said was true, but.

Shiro says.

"Well, is this enough? Now you can join me."

"I don't want to."

"Huuh?"

I then say with a grin.

"I find those who are talkative annoying, and I don't like it."

Shiro raises his hands. Speedily. And grabs my collar.

"Damn you, if you take me too lightly, I'll kill you."

I got dragged down, off from my chair. The other students in the classroom turn to look at us. If this were a normal school, it would have completely been a scene in which bullying was taking place.

But, with a stupid grin on my face, I look up at Shiro.

"..... oh myyy, Shiro, you're really violent. Frankly, I'm really scared and don't want to be friends with you."

"Aren't you the one at fault here, f*ck? You were the one who asked me to talk, so what's the deal with changing the agreement?"

But, I cock my head to the side and say.

"Agreements aside, weren't you the one who didn't keep your end of the bargain? Your story is a lie, right?"

"Ah?"

"I wonder whether that big brother of yours really existed."

"Of course....."

"It's a lie. You have no big brother. Assuming you really do have a big brother. Assuming you really did come to this school for revenge. Then, a person like you who goes about shooting his mouth off about that probably has an empty skull but..... I just don't see how you can be such an idiot. Therefore, there's only one conclusion. You were lying."

At that moment, I raise my right hand. And swiftly jam my fingers straight towards Shiro's eyes, with enough force to pierce through them.

Shiro reacts right away.

Releasing my collar, he draws himself back.

"WTF are you trying to do?"

I smirk.

"I wonder what's the truth behind those red eyes. At the very least, a normal human wouldn't have such red eyes, right? In other words, the person whom you said was experimented on, the one you called your big brother..... don't tell me it's actually you? Shiro."

"....."

"If your lie is too big, you won't be able to deceive me, so you made some subtle allowances and inserted some truth inside, I supposed, but well now, which is which, I wonder. Your desire for revenge is true. The part on

experimentation too. But you have no big brother. Even though you have a desire for revenge, it's not towards this school --- that would be my conjecture."

"....."

"But, if so, why did you come to this school? Because you desire power? No, that's not the only thing. It would be too inefficient otherwise. Then, if that's the case, an affiliated company of the school, the company that practices human experimentation like nothing would be ---"

Taikou Pharmaceuticals --- I was just about to say the name of the corporation that my cousin, Yayoi, is working at, but Shiro snapped his fingers, and I thus kept quiet.

Shiro is activating his 《Headphone Fuzz》. Like a different person from before, he is now filled with murderous intent.

A sword that looks like a huge knife appears in Shiro's hand. It is a knife so large that it would be unthinkable for a normal human to handle it. It is a thing born out of magic.

The depths of his red eyes are giving rise to something akin to abhorrence and, they are glaring right at me.

"..... you are pretty talkative yourself huh, hey."

Said Shiro in a rational, cold voice. Seems like this is the real him. Despite the fact that he is an emotion-type who wears his headphone in his left ear.

I too snap my fingers thrice and point at Shiro.

"You'd kill off anyone who's talkative? Fine. Let's do it. But I'm probably the stronger one."

"Hah, if you are really that strong, I would want you to join me, but a pity that I really hate talkative guys."

"You just repeated my words earlier."

"A dead person's words are voided."

"No, those words should be used in a different situation....."

"Shut up, disappear. Penitence Severance switch."

A cursed song is being let loose in Shiro's brain matter.

His magic has been activated.

He raises his knife.

While I do not know from which labyrinth the technology used for creating that weaponized magic originated, it seems like a dangerous power.

Should I dodge it? Or should I attack before he does?

I must make my choice in an instant.

Should I dodge it with my Acceleration switch, or should I activate my attack magic?

My finger dances, tracing a trail of light in the air. I then select the cursed song used for activating the magic in my 《Headphone Fuzz》.

And, in the moment when I have made my selection, Shiro raises his knife --- but,

"..... kidding. From your reaction speed alone, I could tell that you are pretty skilled."

His knife that was born out of magic disappeared.

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes, and say.

"..... were you testing me?"

"Yeah. I now know that you have some ability."

"If we went at it for real, you'd just be put to shame though."

"I wonder. We won't know until we fight it out."

"No, I can tell."

"Is that so? Then, lend me that power of yours in the labyrinth."

Once again, Shiro holds his hand out to me.

And says.

"I won't do anything bad to you. Our interests should be aligned. So, join me."

I look down at that hand with half-opened eyes. This school is really strange. Kiryuu Kiri also did the same though, is it fashionable to hold out one's hand, I wonder. You guys are not even Americans who are so fond of their handshakes.

I say.

"But, you never told me what I wanted to hear."

"You want me to tell you about my background? Ah ~, I see. Just as you said. I'm here for revenge."

"Smells like a lie."

"It's true, I'm telling you. I need power to carry out my revenge. But I can't tell you who I want to take revenge on, and I won't want to tell you either. If I'm a loose-lipped idiot, then you won't want to follow me right?"

Indeed.

But, Shiro is mistaken. Whether one were loose-lipped or not, I have no intention of following anyone. I have no intention of trusting anyone else.

The only things I believe in, are myself, and money.

I hold out my hand. Clasp Shiro's hand, smile and say.

"All right. I know that you have to get me on your side and win against Mizuiro Gunjou. That's why I shall become your friend."

"Heh, you are unexpectedly a great guy....."

But, I cut him off and say.

"But can you pay me? My friendship can be bought with money."

"Huuuh? Are you saying that for real....."

The moment he said that, Piih, the siren-sounding bell started ringing again.

It is signaling the start of the second hour.

Shiro looks up at the bell, then glowers at me and says.

"..... you are a real piece of trash."

I smirk.

"I'm often told that. So, what's it going to be? Are you going to buy me with money? If you reject my proposal, then I'm going to go negotiate with Gunjou. She looks like she's rich, and will surely buy me. And if that happens, you will lose. Oh my oh my, your desire for revenge looks questionable to me, huh? Well, let me just quote you my price. For each labyrinth raid, my friendship charge will be six million, how's that?"

"....."

"No good? Too high? Why, so you're just a broke guy. I have no business with broke guys. Well then, the deal's over, goodbye ~"

As I am about to let go of Shiro's hand, he returns with a stronger grip, and says.

"..... I'll pay, just once for now."

Seems like he can afford it.

No, I know that he can afford it. At the very least, the people who are risking their lives actively at this school, should be able to afford this much.

After all, they are getting paid by the school with this kind of money, and besides, the maintenance of 《Headphone Fuzz》 requires lots of money. The more one is active, the more money one gets, in mind-numbing amounts; however, in order to use magic, insane amounts of money must be paid out. Thus, it is more like magic is dependent on money as a raw material, and can only be employed through expending money.

It is thus as such, I need a limitless amount of money more than anyone else.

Partly for the sake of maintaining several of the powerful 《Headphone Fuzz》 that I have in my possession, partly for the sake of acquiring new magic technology, though, that is all just part of the process.

There is only one reason why I need money.

I need money for privately developing the devices needed to invade the most difficult eternal labyrinth --- 《Apocalypse Alice》 .

Right now, I have employed the help of a certain researcher for such development, and every month, I have to pay out hundreds of millions of yen. Thus, I am always short of money. It never is enough.

At any rate, I need money.

I need fame.

I need power.

I do not need anything else, nor do I believe in anything else.

Buddies, friendship, a purpose in life, romance, love, youth, I have no time to believe in such stupid things.

The only things I need to believe in, are myself and money.

To save my little sister Saki who will not be saved by anyone else in this world --- to protect what is important to me, no matter how much power I have in this world, it will thus never be enough.

Therefore, I need money.

I need magic.

I need money.

I need magic.

I need money for using magic.

I smile frivolously, and say.

"Yaah, if you can pay me, then we will be friends. I have a principle of never betraying my friends."

Shiro brushes away my hand and says.

"I can't really trust you."

"For real? Well, I'm not interested about getting you to trust me, as long as you pay me."

"Trash."

"Ah-haha, like I said, I have often been called that."

Shiro glares at me with his red eyes. But I am already used to getting such glares.

Shiro says.

"Fine. I'll pay. You will be under my command. Follow my orders."

"Oh my, aren't we supposed to be friends?"

"Shut up trash."

Shiro turns around and returns to his desk. At the same time, Honjou-sensei enters the classroom.

"All right, we're starting the second-hour period! We don't have much time, so sit down! Now!"

And with that, the second hour starts.

『Second Hour ---Lesson on memorizing the structure of the labyrinth made by the girl』

The lesson in the second hour, is to focus on memorizing the map that was made from analyzing the scans done from the outside, by the researchers of Taikou Pharmaceuticals, on the labyrinth made by the girl.

According to the intel, the labyrinth takes the form of a school.

It is made up of rooms like classrooms, teachers' office, infirmary, home-econs room, etc. etc.

But, it is a large place with twelve levels above and fifteen levels below. On top of that, all the corridors are complex, like a maze. Thus, it is necessary to completely grasp the architecture from the map before our intrusion. Otherwise, getting lost and slowed down as such will prevent the labyrinth from getting cleared before the time limit is up.

If the time is used up, then there is the possibility of three million people losing their lives this time, thus, failure is not allowed.

It is therefore necessary to go straight to where the girl is and kill her without getting lost along the way.

The girl is on the eighth level underground.

In a cubicle of the toilet at the end of the corridor.

It is not known why she is in the toilet.

But, the location is known.

We memorized the route.

The talk about it having a low level of difficulty might indeed be true. The map scan was detailed, and it seems easy to reach the girl.

In that case, it will be easy to kill her, I suppose.

With that, the second hour comes to an end.

『Third Hour ---Lesson on the girl's weakness』

The third-hour period is even easier.

It is a lesson on the girl's weakness.

The girl is weak against water. If a bucket of water were poured onto her, it would be like corrosive acid to her and her body would be covered in burns.

A cubicle in the toilet.

Water.

If the thing about 'girls contracting the 《Labyrinth Disease》 is because of a darkness they carry' were true, then one could more or less imagine what might have happened to the girl.

The part about her being popular in school --- is it really true?

Perhaps she is actually a target of bullying?

Or, like getting shut inside the toilet and having water poured onto her?

"....."

But, to me, it does not matter. The diseased girl, 『Asahi Momoka』, is not my little sister.

She is a stranger.

It is not my concern.

Her life and death is none of my business.

Therefore, there is only one thing that matters.

That is, I now know her weakness.



Break-time.

I have left the classroom and am on my way to the toilet.

In this school, you can find a toilet at the end of the corridor after passing by a number of classrooms, but since I did not want to visit a toilet that has been packed by the other students, I went two floors above, to the toilet that is on the floor where the AV room and the meeting room are at.

There are no other students. Naturally. No one would come to a toilet that is this far.

More importantly, we are in the midst of the lesson in killing a diseased girl. There is probably no student who would stay too far away from the classroom. This floor is thus terribly quiet. Even the lights along the corridor have not been switched on.

I look hard at the toilets with half-opened eyes.

The gents is on the right.

The ladies on the left.

Without hesitation, I head towards the ladies.

There is only one reason for that.

And it is because I have never seen the inside of a female toilet.

And the diseased girl that we are going to kill is said to be inside a female toilet.

I want to avoid the stupid situation whereby I would fall behind while fighting just because I do not know the layout of the place that I will be in. Thus, I am about to enter the female toilet for the purpose of learning its layout.

"..... uuw, uuuw, uoh-ueeeh."

I can hear the voice of a woman coming from the toilet. And it is the voice of a woman who is puking.

Following that,

"Haah, haah..... don't get jittery. I-I'll be fine. I'm going to be fine. I'll do it this time too. I'll be able to kill the girl without dying, without letting any of my comrades get killed!"

"....."

I narrowed my eyes and quietly close the door to the toilet.

But, I can still hear the voice. Since this place is terribly quiet with no one else but me.

"..... I'm a genius. I'm a genius. I even have seven corporate sponsors. Even Papa and Mama have great expectations of me. That's why I have to win; I will be worthless if I don't win..... all right. Let's do it. This time too, I'm a perfect genius..... I'll absolutely clear the labyrinth!"

Pah, she patted her face, getting motivated, it seems from the sounds.

A flushing sound.

Running water from the tap at the basin.

It stops.

And then, the woman comes out of the toilet.

The self-proclaimed genius girl --- Mizuiro Gunjou.

With a small back, fair skin and blond hair, that girl walks out of the toilet while wiping her hands with a handkerchief.



I have my back up against the wall just beside the door to the toilet and as such, she never notice me when she came out of the toilet. And I could

have just let her go without calling out to her. More like, a gentleman's manners dictate that I should not call out to a girl after seeing her do all.

But sorry. Unfortunately, I am no gentleman.

Smirking, I say.

"Yaah, what a flashy way of throwing up, vomit-girl."

In an instant, I can see Gunjou's small body make a startled jump in a funny way. She immediately turns around. Her face all red. Filled with a mix of fluster and shame, her tear-filled, almond-shaped blue eyes glare at me,

"W-W-Wh-Wh-Why are you here in such a place!?"

"I am just going to the toilet."

"You don't need to come to a toilet this far right! D-Don't tell me that you tailed me here?"

"Haha. You are being over-sensitive. Everyone's visiting the toilet just before the labyrinth raid, so it's crowded downstairs."

"Ah..... I-I see."

Gunjou seems to accept my explanation, but it was a lie. The toilet below here is empty.

Even after accepting what I have said, Gunjou glares at me again.

"Even so, what's the meaning of eavesdropping at the female toilet! Pervert!"

"Ah-ha, I'm called that quite a lot today. Even I wouldn't have the fetish of getting excited from listening to a girl puke."

Gunjou's face could not have become redder than what it is now. Her body trembling, her mouth quivering, she glares at me with a face that is on the verge of tears, and says.

"..... h-how much have you heard?"

"About?"

"You've been listening all this while right? To me talking to myself in the toilet."

"You talking to yourself? Did you do something like that?"

"Eh!? Ah, you didn't hear that?"

As I see the color of relief gradually returning to Gunjou's face, I grin stupidly and say.

"Yeah. I didn't hear it. I didn't hear anything like 'it's scary it's scary, I have to answer to the expectations of Papa and Mama'."

"Huh?"

Her eyes widen in surprise. Her blue eyes seize me, and following that, a strong hatred blazes in those eyes of hers. She is really easy to figure out. In an adorable way. She holds out her slender right hand. And snaps her fingers thrice.

It was the sound indicating that magic is being activated.

Gunjou says sharply.

"I'm going to kill you!"

Unlike Kiri, when she says 'kill', she means it. At any rate, she is wearing a 《Headphone Fuzz》 in her left ear.

A right-brain type.

An emotion-type.

Furthermore, since the sight of her vomiting have been seen by someone else, her emotions are probably at an all-time high.

"..... Sea Moon Wheel switch."

Said Gunjou.

I knew that magic. It was a magic made from the technology brought back from the eternal labyrinth called Water-Death 7.

By the way, that labyrinth had the architecture of a gigantic municipal pool but --- well, it does not matter now. Anyhow, this magic should be hard to manipulate.

Numerous transparent balls resembling jellyfish with water inside them are floating around Gunjou, and they start rotating furiously with a Gwihn Gwihn sound. The 'jellyfish' that are spinning like circular saws will cut anything that touches them and inject a paralysis poison into the bloodstream --- or something like that, is what the magic is capable of, if I remember correctly.

I look at that with half-opened eyes, and say.

"Water magic huh? The diseased girl this time seems to be weak against water so --- what a nice magic."

Gunjou says.

"Whatever, activate your 《Headphone Fuzz》 as well. I'll teach you what will happen when you make a fool out of me."

"But I don't want to learn what will happen."

"That doesn't matter! Just get on with it! Hurry up! I'll really kill you, you know!?"

"Nah."

"Hey, stop ridiculing me already!"

Gunjou waves her fingers. A water disc flies towards me. Fast. It brushes against my neck and at its high speed, cut into the wall and lodges itself in it.

A thin smile surfaces on my lips and I say.

"You missed?"

"Are you an idiot!? If that had hit you, you would have died!"

"Oh my, weren't you going to kill me?"

"That....."

"Aah, I see. Your magic sucks and you missed."

"There's no way that will haaaaapppeeenn!"

Gunjou raises both her hands in fury. I have no idea how she can let loose so much emotions openly, but she just seems to be such a type.

Possessing strong emotions, and using those emotions to wield magic ---

I look hard at Gunjou and say.

"Hey, vomit-girl."

"If you use those words again, I'll separate your head from your body cleanly."

"Then Gunjou."

"Why are you using my first name!? I'll really send you fly....."

But, I interrupt her and say.

"You know..... why're you going to the labyrinths?"

"Eh?"

"If you're so afraid to the point of barfing, then you should just give up. You're already a rich man's kid right? Then, there should be many ways for you to obtain happiness. There's no need for you to do something like descending to a shitty place where people die right?"

On hearing that, Gunjou lowers her right hand that has been activating her magic.

The 'jellyfish' disappear.

Her blue eyes look hard at me and she says.

"..... it doesn't concern you."

"Well, that's true too."

"Anyway, a second-rate commoner like you shouldn't interfere with a genius like me."

"I'm not doing that, am I?"

"Whatever, just don't interfere with me!"

Gunjou hollers angrily. For some reason, she is on the verge of tears. As expected of an emotion-type. Her expressions have been shifting again and again.

I say.

"Hey Gunjou."

"Like I said earlier, don't call me by my first name....."

But I cut her off.

"If you like, shall I protect you?"

"..... eh."

"A girl like you doesn't need to shoulder everything by herself. There's no need to be afraid of your friends dying, no need to tremble at the prospect of failure. I can do all those in your place. I'll protect you."

At that moment, Gunjou's eyes widen in slight surprise.

"..... w-w-wh-wh-wha-what are you saying? Erm erhh, does that mean....."

Her cheeks turn red. Her blue eyes waver, looking troubled. Just as I thought, she is an emotion-type that is easy to figure out.

I grin, and say.

"So, will you pay me money?"

"Huh?"

For a while, Gunjou's face changes to one that seems unable to comprehend what I am saying.

Thus, I explain to her.

"By the way, Shiro seems willing to pay me six million for a raid, but if you're willing to pay ten million or more, then I will happily become your knight. Compared to vomiting out of fear, ten million is a cheap....."

At that moment, Gunjou takes a step forward. And sends her right fist flying straight at my cheek. It would have been an easy thing to dodge, but I took that fist. The inside of my mouth got cut, and I can taste iron.

I lick my wound with my tongue and smile foolishly.

"..... let's see, for the pain I'm feeling now, make that twelve million. If you want me to help you....."

"You're annoying, shut up trash!"

"Then, our negotiations have failed? Are you okay with me lending a hand to Shiro? If I'm on his side, you might just lose, you know?"

"Hahh, don't get too carried away. Who do you think I am?"

"Scaredy cat vomit-girl?"

Her fist came at me again, but I did not take that this time. I take a step backward, and while smirking, I look at her intently.

"I think you're going to need me though."

"I don't need someone like you."

"Well, if you change your mind along the way....."

"I won't. I'll teach you in the labyrinth. That who's the real genius. I'll teach you that someone of your level is of no use in that kind of place!"

After yelling angrily, Gunjou turns around. And faces her back to me.

At the same time, Piuh, the siren rings out.

It is sounding the start of the fourth hour.

Therefore, I too start walking, and Gunjou then says.

"Hey, stop following me!"

"Even if you tell me that, we're in the same class, aren't we?"

"If we return together, the rest might think we were doing something together right!?"

"I was looking at you vomit, and you were being looked at while vomiting."

"Ah-uuwu..... I-I'll definitely kill you in the labyrinth!"

"Hahah."

I laugh, and head back to the classroom.

『Fourth Hour ---Lesson on selecting the magic to kill the girl』

The fourth-hour period --- is a lesson on selecting the magic that will be useful for this labyrinth raid.

Basically, inside a 《Headphone Fuzz》, there is only room enough to accommodate six cursed songs.

In other words, one can only use six varieties of magic.

This means that one must deal with any kind of situation with just those, however, there were many a times that one would not be able to tackle the obstacles and traps a labyrinth had given rise to with just six varieties of magic.

Let's just take the offensive class of magic as an example:

Extreme close-range offense.

Close-range offense.

Mid-range offense.

Far-range offense.

Extreme far-range offense.

Special offense system.

If one were to employ these six varieties of magic, one would have no room for any kind of defensive magic.

Or say, room for illusionary magic or magic used for sensing traps. Or magic used to forcibly open locked doors and so forth.

Thus normally, the six available slots will be filled by 『2 Offense, 2 Defense, 2 Support (balanced configuration)』, or 『3 Offense, 2 Defense, 1 Support (offense-specialized configuration)』, or song distributions such as these that have a certain degree of balance will be employed.

However, in the case of team raids on a labyrinth, it will be a different story altogether.

Those who excel in offensive magic will be in charge of offense; those who excel in defensive magic will undertake the responsibility of defense all by themselves.

And while protecting those who only equip themselves with support magic for the sole purpose of breaking through the labyrinth, the team advances --- such has been the strategy employed as a result.

That is why one will need friends.

The more friends one has, the more tactics that will be available. Any kind of irregular situation could thus be dealt with.

In order to break through the labyrinth this time, there are two classes of magic that are absolutely necessary.

Sensing of traps.

Unlocking of magic locks.

Along the route to the diseased girl located on the eighth level below ground, there are three locks that have to be undone.

Two of the floors are trapped zones, according to the reports.

However,

"....."

It is not something I am concerned with.

As always,

Two slots for offense.

One for defense.

Three for support.

This is the usual configuration I go with and I have used that in all the labyrinths I have raided. Thus, I have no intention of changing anything this time as well. Teamwork? What's that? Trusting in others with the hope that your trust will be answered is a thing meant for the lazy fellows who have been drowned in the lukewarm waters of a peaceful world.

That was why, during that lesson --- while everyone was desperately fretting about what songs to choose for their 《Headphone Fuzz》, I merely gazed out vacantly at the schoolyard.

『Fifth Hour ---Time for forming the teams for raiding the labyrinth made by the girl』

The final lesson before invading the labyrinth.

It is a period used for discussing among your buddies the tactics to be used and telling the rest what sort of magic you have selected for your 《Headphone Fuzz》 .

But, since I have no buddies nor friends, I did not talk to anyone.

"....."

Scratch that, in the midst of it, Shiro approaches me and says.

"All right. I've transferred the money. Just as promised, you're now in my team. So I'll introduce the rest of the team to you."

I look at Shiro. Behind him, is a timid-looking girl with black hair tied up into a ponytail. And a bespectacled guy.

Shiro says.

"Once we enter the labyrinth, these will be your buddies. Yuuyami Himi is on all-support role. Endou Yousuke on all-defense."

The girl's name is Yuuyami Himi.

The bespectacled guy is Endou Yousuke, it seems.

Each of them has all his or her slots filled with a single class of magic. In other words, these people employ teamwork.

I ask Shiro.

"Then, you are on all-offense?"

But Shiro grins and shakes his head.

"I'm on all-specialized-offense."

"Huuuh?"

"Well, mine are really special, so you can just think of them as all-offense. So, about you. I'm hoping that you can adjust yours to a balanced configuration though."

I nod in affirmation.

"It's just nice then."

"Yours is already balanced?"

"Yeah."

"All right. Then, we can beat Gunjou this time."

Pachin, Shiro snaps his finger once.

I look at him in amazement.

Since I now know why Shiro and his gang had always lost to Gunjou. In a team which each member only carries one type of magic, it will be over if even one of them is out of commission. In that case, more members should be assembled so that the team can proceed even if a member gets taken out, but this class has a charismatic, vomit-girl called Mizuiro Gunjou, and more or less the entire class are subordinated to her and as such, he wasn't able to further increase his allies.

That was why Shiro had been losing --- well, at the very least, that should be what he is thinking.

With half-opened eyes, I look at Gunjou who is at the front of the classroom, giving instructions to her teammates regarding this particular labyrinth raid, and I then say.

"Hey Shiro."

"Hn?"

"Who's stronger, you or Gunjou?"

"Me."

"Hah."

"It's true, you know?"

"Well, fine."

While gazing at Gunjou's almond-shaped eyes and fair skin, I say.

"So what's Gunjou's slot configuration?"

Shiro too looks in the direction of Gunjou, and says.

"I don't know about that for this raid, but it should be a balanced configuration that gives more emphasis to offensive capabilities."

"..... oh. 3 offense, 2 defense, 1 support?"

"It's the opposite for defense and support. 1 defense and 2 support."

"Aah, I see. Feels good to know."

I smirk.

Even after gathering so many allies, Gunjou does not believe in anyone. She is an outright balanced type. Even if she were to lose all her allies, she has a slot configuration that would enable her to clear the labyrinth by herself. She is prepared for the worst possible scenario.

In other words, she is serious.

To the point of barfing from the nervousness arising out of her seriousness.

On the contrary, Shiro fully trusts in his buddies. Normally, with just these members, having each of them on a single class of magic would be unfathomable. Or, maybe it is because that it is necessary for a focused attack to shake Gunjou off with just these few members.

But if it comes to that, then indeed,

"With all slots equipped with specialized offensive magic, then Shiro should have more firepower when it comes down to killing each other....."

Though I have no idea whether humans do kill one another in a peaceful country like Japan.

By the way, in the other countries, in the underground world of the small countries, while raiding the labyrinths there, if one encounters other raiders, it would be an obvious thing to kill each other for personal gains.

Those with power will get everything.

Everyone else is an enemy.

Depending on the situation, there are even times when you can get attacked by your own teammates from behind.

In those places, there is no fool who will fill their slots with just one class of magic. There is a limit to how much of a good guy he can be. Or maybe, there is a special reason as to why he has to do that.

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes.

"What?"

Said Shiro, to which I reply.

"I was pondering about whether you are a fool or you are having special circumstances."

"Ah?"

"Never mind. Well, seems like the real thing is starting."

I say.

I look out the window with half-opened eyes.

From afar, along with a roaring noise, there are five transport helicopters flying towards here.

We are going to move.

To Kanagawa Prefecture where the diseased girl is.

Pahn Pahn, Honjou-sensei knocks on the blackboard twice and says.

"Al~right, we're halfway through the fifth-hour period. We'll finish the remaining half while moving to the actual ground. Everyone, are you ready?"

On hearing that, my classmates remain quiet with nervous-looking faces.

Gunjou stands up and puffs out her chest.

"Huh, who do you think I am? I'm the genius Mizuiro Gunjou right? I was already ready since the day I was born."

What a liar. Didn't you just puke from being nervous?

Shiro then says. To his two pals behind.

"All right, let's go. We'll win this time."

And brings up his palm.

"Let's do this."

Endou Yousuke meets his hand with a slap.

"I'll do my best."

Yuuyami Himi also lightly slaps his hand in a timid way.

Finally, Shiro turns his terribly gloomy looking palm towards me.

"You too. Even though your friendship was bought with money, we're a team right now. Please look out for me."

"..... don't tell me you want me to hi-five you?"

"Yeah."

"You would have to excuse me due to religious reasons."

"Go to hell."

Shiro laughs.

And Gunjou is looking at the both of us. Glaring at me.

I grin stupidly with half-opened eyes.

Even as I smile, the situation continues to advance.

There is not much time left before the time limit will be up.

Honjou-sensei says.

"Now now, let's get going! Everyone, leave the classroom and board the choppers!"

And thus, we started moving towards Kanagawa Prefecture.



13:03 PM1 hour 27 minutes left before the diseased girl turns into an
《Eternal Labyrinth》

The transport helicopters lifted off with adolescent guys and girls packed into them.

Vibration.

Roaring noise.

The tension from my classmates.

The journey from Kichijou, Tokyo, to Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, by helicopters should take only about fifteen minutes, but for some reason, it seems like a long journey.

Beside me, sat Shiro's buddy, Yuuyami Himi. With a black ponytail. And timid-looking, down-turned eyes.

Himi calls out to me.

"E-Erm....."

I pretended to not hear her soft voice over the roar of the helicopter and did not answer.

Himi then starts,

"Ah....."

And then goes quiet. She hangs her head, looking troubled. After a few minutes of silence,

"Erm."

She once again calls out to me, this time with a slightly louder voice.

I turn my half-opened eyes to Himi and say.

"I'm actually ignoring you."

"Eh..... ah, sorry."

"So, what is it?"

"Erm, I mean..... I was wondering, Arisu-kun, are you already used to raiding labyrinths?"

"Why did you think that?"

"Well, it's because you look very calm."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. You've been grinning all this while."

"Haha, more like smirking..... perhaps."

"So, does that mean you're not afraid?"

Himi asks, looking at me. Fear is reflected from her eyes.

I'm not afraid?

It is difficult to answer that. There is no way that I will not be afraid to go to a place where I might die. I too fear dying like anyone else.

But, I have gotten used to that. As I have been continuing to set foot in places where I might die, my senses have become numb and I have gotten used to it.

But it is not like my fear had disappeared. I am merely used to it. I am merely used to walking together with fear. I am just used to grinning like a fool, shrugging it off.

I continue grinning stupidly without answering, and Himi continues.

"I-I'm afraid. Even though this is already my third raid, I still....."

"Is that so? But isn't that normal?"

"But, people like Gunjou-san, Shiro-san and Yousuke-kun seem to remain unbothered by it, and yet, I'm so afraid that it's unbecoming....."

At the very least, I had seen Gujou vomit in the toilet so I do not think anyone would be able to remain 'unbothered'. Well, it might just be a matter of degree.

Himi is extremely afraid. I wonder whether it is because of her strong sensitivity towards fear. But that is not a bad thing. The type that has

strong sensitivity, gets a boost in their capabilities in sensory and support classes of magic.

And she has a full-support configuration in her cursed song selection.

Which means that she might provide a good amount of power in those.

I say to her.

"You know."

"Ah, yes."

"I understand that you're afraid, but what good will it do to tell me that?"

"Ah, ah, I-I'm sorry..... because we've never talked before despite being in the same team....."

"So?"

"Erm, I might not be of much help, but since you're someone whom Shiro-san relies on, you must be a really amazing person."

I look hard at her with half-opened eyes.

"So, as a full-support member, I will provide support to you with everything I got, so please take care of me, that's what..... I wanted to say....."

I stare at her with half-opened eyes.

"..... I-I'm sorry..... did I do something that made you angry?"

She says with a face that seems to be on the verge of tears, to which I reply.

"No. From the beginning, I have always had this face."

"Ah, I'm sorry."

"Well I get it. Do help me out when I need support."

"Y-Yes!"

"Then, can I make my very first request for now?"

"Yes, what'll it be?"

Said Himi happily, to which I say.

"I feel gloomy while we're on the move, so can you don't talk to me like you're a friend of mine?"

"Ah....."

This time, from behind Himi whose face is in shock, Mr. Glasses speaks up. His eyes behind those glasses are sharp.

Endou Yousuke is his name right? Looking at me, he says.

"Hey hey, don't bully Himi."

"Hn?"

"And also, you're a pretty unpleasant guy. What's wrong with you? Is there any benefit you can get from having an attitude that makes others hate you?"

I look up, at Yousuke with a thin smile on my face.

"At the very least, I can spend my off days quietly."

"Haha, because you lack friends?"

"That's right."

"Then, why don't we hang out together next time? After all, we're now teammates. We can go watch a movie on Sunday, and then chit-chat at a family restaurant."

"What kind of creepy thing is that?"

"Don't sweat the small stuff. Anyhow, in order for us to hang out together on our rest days ---"

Yousuke then holds out his hand. And he then says.

"Let's all survive this. I'm on all-defense, so I'll do everything in my power to not let any of my teammates die. Please take care of me, Shinnosuke."

Yousuke further goes on to take Himi's hand and put it above his. And further goes on to say to Shiro behind,

"Hey Shiro ~. Come over here. Let's do another huddle before it starts."

"Hn ~?"

Shiro's face pokes out and after looking at Yousuke and Himi, he piles his hand onto theirs.

I then wearily say to the trio who are hard-selling me with their piled up hands.

"Erm, I thought about this as well during the hi-five session, can you guys stop this kind of harassing act?"

Shiro then smiles and says.

"Shut up, just put your hand on top. I already paid you six million, didn't I?"

My hand was grabbed out of my own volition.

And with the hands of four people put together, one on top of another.

Yousuke says.

"Well, leader. Your speech please."

Shiro nods and says.

"We'll definitely win this time. The labyrinth difficulty is low. There'll be no casualties, and we'll get our hands on everything. Let's all survive and return, everyone!"

And then, the three team members of Shiro's team answer.

"Yeah!"

"Yes!"

"Crap, you're noisy ~"

At that moment, the helicopter starts descending.

At last, labyrinth infiltration is about to begin.

There is about one hour left before the time limit will be up.

If we fail to kill the girl, three million people might be sacrificed.

That is why we cannot fail.

We will kill the diseased girl in that remaining hour --- and save the world.



It started.

The time started.

The last hour used for killing the girl started.

"....."

I take a deep breath in my seat.

Snap, snap, snap, I slowly snap my fingers, so slow to the point that it seems like my 《Headphone Fuzz》 will not even activate.

In order to calm my heart.

In order to calm my brain waves.

I move my finger, following the rhythm and the beat, and match my heartbeat to them. But still, my heart cannot seem to calm down.

Perhaps it is because of the tension of the other classmates in the helicopter that has spread to me, I am feeling strange and just cannot calm down,

"..... haha, I wonder whether it is because I'm pretty nervous myself."

I laugh at myself, by myself.

In the helicopter, there are some who are on the verge of tears. Some who are forcing themselves to laugh. Some who have turned their heads to the sky with their eyes closed. And some who are wearing vacant expressions, murmuring to themselves, though there should only be a few more minutes left to do that.

I wave my finger. I order my 《Headphone Fuzz》 to display the time limit before the diseased girl becomes a 《Complete Labyrinth》, which I had input beforehand.

Upon doing that, a blinking light appears in my mind, showing that there is one hour and five minutes left.

In other words, in another five minutes, we will infiltrate the labyrinth.

"Five minutes."

I mutter.

The time limit disappears.

From inside the helicopter, came Gunjou's voice.

"..... here it comes!"

I look at her with half-opened eyes. Gunjou's nervous yet determined face comes into my view. Beyond her, the rear of the helicopter starts opening slowly.

Instantly, as a gust of wind and a roaring noise enter, the sight of a blue sky comes into view. Even though a sound insulating function derived from a magic technology brought back from a labyrinth should be running inside the helicopter, it is still pretty noisy.

The sound of the wind. The sound of the propellers. How high are we in altitude right now, I wonder. We should not have flown to too low a place. Since the labyrinth disease's contagious area extends even upwards into the air, the helicopter should be flying at an altitude where it would not come into contact with that area.

Honjou-sensei stands up and raises her voice to pierce through the sound of wind that is blowing in.

"Now ~, it's finally time to kill the girl! It'll be fine! If you deal with it calmly, it should be an easy win for you!"

Mizuiro Gunjou turns around and adds after her.

"Of course! If you all follow me, there won't be a problem, so everyone, just trust me and it'll be smooth sailing!"

Different from the nervous face she showed for an instant just now and the weak girl who puked in the toilet, her current expression is one of haughtiness, resoluteness, and full of confidence and composure.

But that is probably just an act. Or she is performing self-suggestion on herself. I look at her face with a grin.

Gunjou glares back at me and as expected, a smile surfaces on her as she says.

"Listen up everyone! We'll win this time too! We won't let Shiro and the rest who don't listen to me do a thing. We will! It is us who will! Clear this labyrinth and become saviors!"

At the same time she says that, the angle of the helicopter changes and the land below comes into sight.

The scenery of Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, which has been transformed into a labyrinth.

Twelve levels above ground.

Fifteen levels below ground.

I know that much, but from the looks of it, it seems to be as large as fifty kilometers in radius. A gigantic school looking more like a mountain range has appeared. Everything within that area has become the labyrinth.

And with that kind of scale, if we fail, three million people or more will probably die.

The students clearly waver on seeing the labyrinth. Naturally. It is not often that one can get to see a labyrinth that gigantic. And also, it is said that the difficulty of a labyrinth is correlated to its scale many a times.

"I-It's impossible for us....."

A guy just diagonal of me, trembles as he says that.

The vibes of fear immediately spread. The girl beside me is on the verge of tears and says.

"I-I..... didn't hear anything about it being this big....."

However, that budding fear is immediately dealt with.

"Don't waver, idiots!"

It is the angry cry of Gunjou.

"Didn't you hear what Sensei told us? The difficulty of the labyrinth is 0.4! That's like taking a walk in the park! If you listen to what I say, we can clear it even while humming a song! So now, everyone, look at me!"

Pahn, Pahn, Gunjou slaps her hands together. The students look at Gunjou. As before, she says with a great amount of composure.

"Now, let's ascertain this again before we go! Who is your leader? Who is the one who can protect you?"

One of the students then answers.

"..... i-it's Mizuiro Gunjou-sama."

"Eh? I can't hear you? Who is it?"

"It's the genius, Mizuiro Gunjou-sama!"

Gunjou nods with a look of satisfaction, grins and says.

"Then, there's nothing to fear. Don't shiver. Don't be afraid. As long as you follow me, all of you will be fine! Our team will once again kill the girl and clear the labyrinth!"

She proclaims, clenching her fist.

The atmosphere in the helicopter then changes. Gunjou has dispelled the anxiety of everybody and captured the hearts of the students in an instant.

I look intently at Gunjou, and smirk.

"..... taking on the responsibility of the lives of others, it's no wonder you puked in the toilet."

Shiro then speaks from beside me.

"Shinnosuke."

"What is it, Shiro?"

"It's about time."

"That's right."

"Even though that arrogant girl said that, we're going to win this time. So please do your job."

I smirk as I look at Shiro. Shiro is also nervous.

"Well, I plan to do six million yen's worth of work though."

"Do more."

"Then pay me ten million."

"Aah?"

Shiro glares at me, then smiles.

"Well whatever. I'm expecting good things from you. And also..... hey Himi. Yousuke."

"Yes."

"Uhn."

The two of them reply.

Shiro says.

"Let's go over the strategy for the last time. The point of intrusion for our class 5 is the corridor of the first floor. However, it has been determined that the corridor has been rigged with a trap of endless corridors, so moving along the corridor will lead us to nowhere. So we'll enter the infirmary, break through the window and get out into the schoolyard. Then, from the school gate, we'll re-enter the building via the stairs that lead to the basement ---"

I interrupt and say.

"If the members here need to have things explained to them again at this point in time, then it's better for them to just escape right away right? They can't win anyway. Anyone who can't remember the map by now should just die."

Shiro looks at me. And after looking back at the other two, he smiles.

"Like what he said. Well, if it's you guys, it should be fine I guess."

Himi says fearfully.

"I-I'll do my best."

Yousuke pushes his glasses up with his finger and says.

"Of course we'll be fine. The map this time isn't complicated and in the first place the difficulty level isn't high. The only problem is whether we'll lose to Gunjou or not, isn't it?"

Shiro nods.

"That's right."

"Then the only thing that's left to be decided is our formation. Shiro will take the lead, and protect Himi who's in charge of support, and I'll take the rear like always, but what position will this shitty, wisecracking transfer student take?"

Yousuke points at me, to which I ask.

"Who are you calling wisecracking transfer student?"

"Who else but you?"

"Eeh ~"

I smirk.

While smiling wryly, Shiro says.

"Shinnosuke'll be at the front as well. Beside me, and will protect Himi with me."

"It's troublesome but fine."

"All right. Then, once we infiltrate the labyrinth, we'll start running at full speed. Faster than anyone else, until we reach the diseased girl in the toilet at the eighth basement level within twenty minutes. We'll then use twenty minutes to kill the girl. The rest of the twenty minutes will be our buffer time. All right?"

"Fine. It's a pretty straightforward strategy though."

Yousuke was the one who answered to that.

"We can't afford the time for a convoluted plan for clearing an easy labyrinth, can we? Otherwise, we won't be able to compete with Gunjou."

I then turn my sight towards Gunjou who is giving orders to the other classmates in a high and mighty manner as usual, and asks Shiro.

"Will Gunjou do anything to hinder us?"

"I doubt that even she will do something like that. The number of victims will be tremendous if we fail. She won't be able to afford to do something like....."

"Hindering our progress?"

"Yeah."

"How tranquil. As expected of Japan."

"Hn?"

Shiro looks at me. I shrug my shoulders and reply.

"Nothing."

However, the world is actually filled with people who would even kill their allies, not caring about sacrificing the lives of others, just for their own selfish gains.

Gunjou will not hinder us.

Gunjou will not hinder us.

In other words, she is just,

"A rich lady living in a peaceful country."

I murmur with a foolish smile, which should not be audible to her over the loud roar of the helicopter, yet she turns to look at me. Pointing her finger at me, she says.

"I'll let the transfer student know my true power!"

"..... haha, you should just go play some sports, m'lady."

"Eh?"

"Ah-hahaha."

"Hey! I can't hear you over the loud noise of the propeller. If you have something to say, say it loudly!"

I smile and gently wave my hand. Maybe it is because my feelings have reached her with that, her almond-shaped eyes curl up even further.

"I'll kill you!"

She hollers.

With that, it is time.

Honjou-sensei says in a loud voice.

"It's time! Right now, we're flying above the labyrinth! Prepare your intrusion magic."

Intrusion magic is a magic used for invading any labyrinth and it is a magic that has been loaded into a 《Headphone Fuzz》 right from the beginning. It is a magic that does not require much space in the brain to use and can even be used by idiots.

When one uses this magic close to the labyrinth one wants to invade, he or she will be transported inside the labyrinth to the intrusion coordinates designated by a laser beforehand. This time, with the laser from the helicopter beaming on the destination coordinates, our class 5 is supposed to be transported to the corridor on the first floor of this school-like labyrinth.

By the way, people like Kiryuu Kiri in other classes should be transported to different locations and are supposed to head towards the diseased girl via different routes.

I snap my fingers once. A cursed song starts playing lightly in my 《Headphone Fuzz》.

《Intrude, Infiltrate, Illegal Intrusion ♪

Intrude, Infiltrate ———》

The intrusion magic in my brain has been activated. The coordinates appear at the back of my retina. All that is left to do is just to chant the incantation that will trigger the infiltration, and in the next instant, I should appear inside the labyrinth.

Honjou-sensei says.

"Not yet. You can't go yet. Put on your armbands."

"Armbands?"

While I cock my head to the side, the other students start putting on their armbands.

From beside me, Shiro hands me a white armband.

"I forgot to pass it to you. Here, Shinnosuke. Put this on."

"What's this?"

"This is the proof that you are a comrade of this class."

I take the armband. 『Class 5』 is written on the armband. It is indeed something that will identify me as a member of this class. On top of that, below the words 『Class 5』 are twenty red ☆ marks.

Honjou-sensei says.

"Those stars represent the number of classmates in the labyrinth. Whenever someone dies or Escapes, a star will disappear."

In other words, it is for me to verify how many of my classmates are left in the labyrinth.

By the way, Escape is also a magic that has been loaded in a 《Headphone Fuzz》 right from the beginning, together with 'Intrusion' as a pair.

It is a magic used to forcibly bail out of the labyrinth. It can be used to eject yourself and one other person in your nearby vicinity out of the labyrinth at the same time.

To put it in another way, if your 《Headphone Fuzz》 gets broken in the labyrinth, then you will not be able to escape without the help of an ally.

That is why having friends is important.

And this armband displays the number of those friends.

Honjou-sensei continues.

"I've always said this, but if four stars were to disappear, it would be impossible to kill the girl so give up on the raid if that happens. Understand?"

Yes, answered the students.

However, it is not something that can be said lightly. This time, the labyrinth raid is of a different nature from that of an 《Eternal Labyrinth》, which will be raided purely for selfish gains.

This is a diseased girl's labyrinth whereby the lives of a few million people living in Kanagawa Prefecture are at stake.

If we fail and escape, it will mean that we have abandoned the lives of those few million people.

Sensei smiles and says.

"Well, since the labyrinth this time has a difficulty level of 0.4, I don't expect anyone to....."

Gunjou cuts her off and says.

"Please immediately expel any trash who escapes from such a labyrinth."

The students laugh.

They laugh nervously.

Sensei smiles at that and then says.

"Well then, fifteen more seconds to go ~. Our class is going to win again this time. Don't let the other classes get the credit."

Ten more seconds.

Gunjou yells.

"Everyone! Once we are in the labyrinth, let's head straight to the end goal! If anyone gets left behind, we're going to beat him up later! Go with this in mind!"

Five more seconds.

Shiro pats me on my back.

And also on Himi's back.

And also on Yousuke's back.

And then says.

"All right, let's do it guys. Do your best."

"Yes."

"Orh!"

"....."

I didn't answer.

One more second.

Sensei says.

"Now go!!"

All at once, the students murmur.

"Dive switch."

"Dive switch."

"Dive switch."

That was the trigger code for activating that cursed song used for intrusion and which is now overflowing in our brains. One by one, the students disappeared, and were transported into the labyrinth.

I look on with half-opened eyes, then finally put on that armband. The armband has 『Class 5』 written on it.

"Ha, I'm a comrade of class 5 huh."

I sneer softly, then widen my eyes slightly, and murmur the trigger code for activating the curse that is overflowing in my brain.

"..... Dive switch."

Instantly.

My body is disassembled, and I am transported into the labyrinth.

Chapter 3 - Labyrinth Dive

My disassembled cells were reassembled inside the labyrinth.

Zuhkihn, Zuhkihn, a pain assaults my head numerous times. This always happens whenever I get teleported into a labyrinth. On top of the cursed song overflowing in my brain, the forceful disassembling and reassembling of my brain is terribly painful.

Colors start flooding into the darkness of my vision.

White light. Red colors. Blue, yellow, green, black.

The pain in my head stops.

My consciousness clears up.

I can see my surroundings.

Right now, I am inside the labyrinth brought forth by the girl.

"You're late Shinnosuke! What's with your sluggish movements!?"

After entering the labyrinth, I got yelled at.

It's Shiro.

I look at him and smirk.

"Well, I'm scared."

"Don't screw around with me!"

Beyond his yell, I can hear the shouts of Gunjou. Pointing her slender finger to her front,

"Goooooooooo!"

Leading her classmates, she starts running with everything she has. Towards the goal of killing the diseased girl.

I look in their direction.

The place we are in is as expected, the corridor of a pretty normal school. The scenery matches the scans done by the scouting corps beforehand.

The labyrinth brought forth by the girl does indeed have the architecture, decors, and atmosphere of a school.

There are a few soft-toy teddy bears in the wide corridor.

Soft toys that are pink, green and orange. The guards for protecting the diseased girl.

The soft toys saw us materialize; they raise both their paws and extend their claws.

"Teddy!"

They howl as if to mock us, then, just as they are about to come attack us, Gunjou has already activated her magic and proceeds to mow them down.

"Shut up! Beasts like you should know your place and not interfere with me!"

Gunjou raises her hands, swings and crosses them over. Upon doing that, the cutters of her 『Sea Moon Wheel Switch』 that have already been activated slice the teddies apart accurately and precisely.

Furthermore, the rest of the students are also good in their own way. Four people who are probably on full-defense roles are standing on both flanks of Gunjou and protecting the sides, and another four behind them are probably on support roles.

One of the girls on support says.

"Mizuiro-san! Eight meters ahead of you, diagonally across your left above is a trap."

"What type?"

"Flame-type....."

"Tanaka! Make a defensive wall! I'll charge through! Yamamoto will destroy the trap in the meantime. Kagiya will fill Tanaka's gap and protect me."

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

Two of the girls who were ordered replied.

"Then, charge!"

Shouted Gunjou.

While calming her allies, Gunjou advances forward with a tremendous amount of vigor.

Shiro grabs my arm and yells angrily.

"Don't just stand there. We need to get moving too!"

He drags me into a run. Well, there's a need to run, I supposed. After all, there is a time limit on us.

"But, we can't really advance through that crowded corridor right?"

I said as I pointed at the sixteen classmates that excluded us, all crammed into the corridor.

Shiro says.

"We're slow because you were late. And I originally wanted us to just charge ahead before Gunjou got her group together."

"Really? I thought since Gunjou has the numbers on her side, it would be wise to just let her go ahead, and we can then just reap the rewards of their effort at the end."

"That's something we can do if the labyrinth has a high difficulty level but --- the labyrinth this time has a difficulty level of 0.4. After seeing how weak those teddies were earlier, there's no doubt that it's really a rank 0.4 labyrinth. In other words, we can just forcefully push through and clear it like that."

"Aah, I see. Then, you can just go ahead without waiting for me right?"

Shiro looks at me in exasperation and says.

"Huuuh? Don't screw with me. I paid you six million, didn't I?"

"Ah-haha. You rather lose and get your money's worth? No no, you aren't such a fool, are you?"

"Nah, it's all your fault. I'm going to cut three million from you and have you take responsibility."

"Ah-ha, don't screw with me. Besides, since I arrived till now, you aren't the least bit anxious. You already have some other strategy right?"

With a few faltering steps, I turn around to look in the direction of Himi at the side. Casting her eyes down, Himi seems uninterested in what's going on around her, and is moving her right finger urgently, using some kind of magic.

Fuh-fuh-fuh, she lets out in shallow breaths.

And then ---

"..... Detour(Picnic) switch."

She murmurs the trigger code needed to activate the magic. A magic circle appears in front of Himi's eyes and she looks at the world through that. And then, completely different from her earlier timidity, her face has a delighted look on it.

"Aahh, aahh, now now, which place is more fun, I wonder?"

She says.

I gaze at her with half-opened eyes, and ask,

"What's with her? What kind of magic is this?"

Shiro then answers.

"It's the type of magic that the scouting corps use."

Following that, Yousuke says from the side.

"Picnic switch is loaded with a path-finding magic that is akin to --- Himi takes a detour with a playful mood while heading to her destination and it turns out to be the better route."

"What's with that roundabout kind of magic? Probably a defective product, I suppose."

"Haha, it's indeed roundabout but, its power is inversely proportional to the constraints it has."

Said Shiro.

"Himi. How is it?"

"Ah, yes, I found an interesting looking place."

"Where?"

"It's just beside here. Beyond this wall is a classroom. If we break down the wall, we can reach the schoolyard from that classroom in the shortest route even without heading to the infirmary."

I look at where Himi's pointing. There is a wall. Just a wall. If we don't have the power to break down the wall, then in the end, this would just be a futile detour however.

Shiro says.

"All~right, well done. Switch to trap detection magic. Check out what's beyond the wall. I'll take it from here."

"Yes!"

Himi dispels her current magic. And starts activating her next one.

Shiro taps the wall with his palm and cocks his head to the side.

"I wonder how thick this is. Should I slice it apart, or open up a hole?"

Yousuke replies.

"Hmmm. I think it's fine to just open a hole that's big enough for people to pass through."

"Well then, a hole it shall be. All right."

Shiro's finger dances. But, Himi then says to him.

"Please slice it apart. There are three obstacles on the other side of the wall."

"Are they the teddies from earlier?"

"I don't know about that but --- if we go through a narrow hole, then it will become a choke point for them to attack....."

But Yousuke cuts her off and says.

"If it's at the level of the obstacles earlier, I'll take care of the defense. Shiro. Just go with that magic. Make a hole."

Yousuke snaps his finger and starts tracing it in the air.

"Ok ~ then, let's do it."

To etch the rhythm into his mind, Shiro digs in his heel soundly. Dancing his finger in the air, he activates his magic.

"--- Thousand Deities Flash Of Light switch."

A spear appears in his right hand. The tip of the spear is rotating like a drill. Shiro puts his left foot forward,

"Piieerce it throouuugghh!"

In a hurling motion like that of a baseball pitcher who's giving everything he has, the tip of the drill strikes the wall. Together with a burst of light, a spiral appears in the center of the wall, and the tip of the drill explodes. But a new tip appears. And explodes. Appears. Explodes. Repeating at a blinding speed, a hole that's large enough for a person to pass through starts appearing in the wall.

Before long, parts of the wall fell off. And a classroom appears on the other side. Shiro then passes through to the other side.

And just like what Himi said, on the other side were teddies. Three of them.

"Teddy!"

"Teddy!"

"Teddy!"

They come attacking Shiro all at once. Shiro is unable to take any countermeasure.

"Yousuke!"

He yells.

"I got it! Rather, I've already activated my magic! Reverse-Force switch!"

I know of that magic. The forces in the targeted area will be reversed for an instant. Only an instant. Just for one instant. However, even if it's only for an instant, a magic that's able to reverse forces requires great power.

The bodies of the teddies that were attacking Shiro fell back. The teddies are surprised but, it's all over. Shiro takes up his stance again. He didn't throw his spear immediately. Even in this precarious situation, Shiro is completely calm, and as if he is adjusting his angle of aim, tohn, tohn, tohn, he ascertains his footing.

"It should be here."

And he hurls the spear in one stroke.

The spear pierces through one of the teddies. And at the exact same time, the other two stop in their tracks. And then,

"End it."



In the next instant, the tip of the drill exploded. All three teddies were scattered to the four winds simultaneously. Shiro's movements were

wonderful. The enemies were easily defeated not because they were weak. With his movements just now, even if they were many opponents, they could have been taken care off without a glitch.

"All right, it's over ~. You guys can come over now. We're going to get to the outside!"

"Yes!"

"Orh!"

Himi and Yousuke pass through the hole.

They are quite a good team, it seems. Both Himi and Yousuke trust Shiro, and Shiro answers with the same trust. If not for his numbers, what Shiro said about being able to win against Gunjou might just be true.

I slowly pass through the hole. Shiro looks at me and said.

"Aren't you slacking off?"

"Haha, I'm actually a NEET at home."

Though I don't even have a home.

Shiro smiles and says.

"I wonder whether it was really a good idea to have paid six million to hire such an unmotivated fellow."

I smirked but did not reply. I merely ascertained the state of the classroom with half-opened eyes.

A classroom without anyone.

Desks.

Blackboard.

In a small corner of the blackboard, a message written in chalk went like this.

『Every one of you, I'll kill all of you. Every one of you, I'll kill all of you.』

The same line was repeated twice.

I look at that with half-opened eyes, and say.

"The words 'every one of you', means the same thing as the words 'all of you'....."

Every one of you, I'll kill all of you.

Every one of you, I'll kill all of you.

The composition was as ridiculous as falling down the ass of a horse.

Were the brains of Asahi Momo filled with moss, or, was there a special reason for her to make them rhyme in a meaningless way?

The cursed song that plays while activating magic via the 《Headphone Fuzz》 emphasizes on the rhyme to stimulate the brain. That's why users of the 《Headphone Fuzz》 become hardcore at using rhyming words in their daily lives. But, a 《Headphone Fuzz》 isn't available to a normal civilian. Normal civilians aren't allowed to use them.

And, the diseased girl this time --- Asahi Momoka should have been a civilian. If she had been a practitioner of magic, this fact would definitely have been in the reports from the scouting corps.

The reason is because, there had been many a times, that a labyrinth brought forth by a diseased magic user had a high level of difficulty and a really nasty nature.

Every one of you, I'll kill all of you.

Every one of you, I'll kill all of you.

There isn't any light --- rather, it's a dark classroom that has no fluorescent lamp installed.

I looked intently at the blackboard for a while ---

"..... hey Shiro. Wait a minute."

I say.

Shiro and the rest are just about to exit from the window into the schoolyard.

"Hn?"

From behind me, on the other side of the wall, I can hear the soft voice of Gunjou.

"We broke into the infirmary. Now, let's get out into the schoolyard! Let's just finish this off!"

The other team seems just about to get to the outside area as well.

Shiro says.

"Damn! They already got out huh..... hurry, let's overtake Gunjou here!"

Himi says.

"The window here is nearer to the school gate."

Yousuke says.

"As expected of Himi. Let's win this time, Shiro!"

"Yeah, of course!"

Shiro puts his hand on the window.

It's bright outside the window, and the wide area of the schoolyard's visible. It has a calm, peaceful, tranquil scenery with the afternoon sun shining down.

But it's strange.

It's clearly strange.

Gunjou's team should have exited into the schoolyard.

But no sign of them could be seen through the window.

And at that moment, I notice the change that is taking place on the armband I'm wearing.

Below the 『Class 5』 that was written on it, there were twenty ☆ marks. They were stars that indicated the number of classmates.

But those stars have started disappearing.

Potsunh, Potsunh Potsunh, three of them disappeared in one go. They have either escaped, or,

"....."

Are dead.

"Crap."

I open my eyes wide, and yell.

"Shiro! Don't open the window!"

But it's too late.

Shiro has opened the window.

"Eh?"

It's night outside the window. More like, it has the color of darkness.

Plains that are colored with darkness.

A red moon.

Blue clouds.

An abnormal scenery.

A scenery made by an abnormal creator.

In other words, the school yard we had been looking at was fake. It was a lie shown to us by Asahi Momoka.

However, according to the reports from the scouting corps, there should have been a schoolyard before us.

In other words, even the scans done by the scouting corps were a lie made by Asahi Momoka.

This is a high rank labyrinth that was masqueraded as a labyrinth with rank 0.4.

Right now, even the real difficulty of the labyrinth is unknown to us.

It might even be at rank 100.

"Damn, she got us."

I moan.

But it's already too late. Khiiiih, I can hear an unpleasant howl from something in the darkness outside the window. I don't know what it is. But

there is no longer any time to idle around and grin foolishly with half-opened eyes.

I have already activated my magic. Waving my finger. The cursed song flows out from my 《Headphone Fuzz》 and fills my brain.

【In an instant ♪ In a flash ♪ In the time of a flash ♪

The flash of time, the flash of an instant ♪ In an instant ♪ In a flash
——】

"Acceleration switch!"

I yell. Clink, a switch flips in my body. My magic activates. I can tell that my body has accelerated. I have only a second's worth of acceleration.

But, just one second wouldn't cut it!

"Shiro, get away from the windooooooooowww!"

I close the interval between Shiro and me in one go. And grab the back of Shiro. Planting my feet into the ground, I pull Shiro to me with all my might.

"Uwah."

Shiro's body flies back into the classroom.

And at the same time, a strange being enters from the window. It is a snake-like creature that looks like a plastic toy with four sections.

Khiih, Khiih, the snake howls as it comes flying in.

"..... kuh."

I twist my body to dodge it.

However, the snake's target isn't me.

It's aiming for Himi.

"Eh, eh....."

Himi couldn't even react. At any rate, she's on all-support. So in the first place, she doesn't possess any magic that can deal with it.

"Damn!"

I yell. I re-activate my magic, but won't be able to make it.

Grabbing the shoulders of Himi, Yousuke yells.

"Dodge it Himi!"

Yousuke has already activated his magic.

"..... Spider Legs switch!"

With that, he steps up to stand in front of Himi. And holds out both his hands. From the center of both his hands, something resembling the eight legs of a spider appears, and threads start dancing out, creating a barrier of threads in front of Yousuke.

The toy snake crashes into that barrier. Khiiih, it screams. And the barrier was easily broken.

"..... huh."

By the time Yousuke uttered that, the snake has already penetrated the center of his left breast.

"Gah-hah."

Yousuke throws up blood and collapses.

All that happened in a moment.

Yousuke might already be dead.

I look at the scene.

With a teary face,

"Nooooooooooooooooo!"

Screamed Himi, but there isn't any time for that. I start activating my next magic. At any rate, we have to deal with that snake but -----

At that moment, Shiro jumps.

"Penitence Severance switch!"

He screams angrily. A huge knife appears in his hands that have already been raised upward.

And as the snake is just about to spring up for the second time, he slashes down at it --- slicing the floor apart --- no, the space apart.

That packed a tremendous amount of destructive power.

The snake was destroyed.

But, Yousuke is on the verge of death.

Shiro yells.

"Yousuke!"

Himi is already by the side of Yousuke. She's using her magic. A magic used for closing up wounds. A magic used to stop bleeding. However, she doesn't have a high enough level of magic that can close up such a big wound loaded in her 《Headphone Fuzz》.

Himi is crying.

"T-The bleeding isn't stopping..... the wound won't close..... what should we do..... i-it's all my..... my fault....."

"Gah, ah..... kuh, this is bad, damn."

Said Yousuke. But it isn't just bad. At this rate, he's going to die.

Those who are weak will die.

This is such a place.

Shiro too goes up to Yousuke.

"Sorry Yousuke! I, I let my guard down!"

He shouts.

But it isn't the time for him to be shouting. A time limit exists here. There isn't time to be concerned with the wounded.

I look up, and say coldly.

"..... Yousuke should be escaping right? Let's leave him and move on."

"F**k you!"

Shiro says, but I reply with half-opened eyes.

"What? More like, you should also say your thanks to me. I saved your life. When we go back, promise me that you'll pay me another 20 million or so."

"....."

Shiro glares at me.

Yousuke grabs Shiro's arm and says.

"..... i-it was my mistake. Don't fight. Besides, it's like what the transfer student said. Go on ahead, Shiro. If we stop here, the 3 million people in Yokohama city will die."

I smile and say.

"..... see, the one who's dying has the soundest words, doesn't he? Let's go."

Shiro narrows his eyes.

Yousuke appears to have started his Escape magic. His 《Headphone Fuzz》 has been activated. If he gets out of here, he might be saved. Or he might just die. While I have no clue as to what would happen, at the very least, there isn't anything that can be done here.

The smell of overflowing blood.

Haah, haah, his breathing is sounding ragged.

Yousuke says to Shiro.

"..... h-hey Shiro. You have a goal right. Then win. Get the better of Gunjou, kill the girl and save the world."

Somehow, it seems like Yousuke knows about Shiro's secret. I look down at Yousuke, then Shiro, and the crying Himi.

What in the world is the relationship between the three of them? Why has these three grouped together in a class whereby nearly everyone is a subordinate of Gunjou?

Well, right now, I don't have the time to think about such things.

"..... would you guys stop your melodrama here? We don't have much time."

Yousuke then looks at me. With a wound in his chest, and mouth smeared in blood. Maybe he won't make it.

"..... h-hey, transfer student."

"What?"

"..... s-say, can you come over here for a sec?"

"Huuh? Just hurry up and escape."

"..... p-please. It's hard for me to raise my voice."

Yousuke's voice rasps from the blood in his throat.

"How troublesome."

Without a choice, I move to beside Yousuke. And he grabs my arm. And pulls me to him. And tells me.

"..... I, have a favor to ask."

"Hn?"

"S-Shiro, is an amazing guy..... so, please protect him..... in my place."

"..... I'm fine with that, so you will be paying me?"

"Fuh, ha-haha, fine. I'll pay you. But..... I already know this. That you are..... you're a pretty nice guy."

"Aah?"

Yousuke is saying some shitty, heavy stuff.

"Earlier, you were..... frantically protecting Shiro right.....?"

"....."

"That's why I'm entrusting it. To you..... I'm escaping but..... p-protect, Shi....."

I cover Yousuke's mouth with my hand to shut him up. And say.

"Are you an idiot? You'll really die you know? Hurry up and just escape."

Yousuke looks up at me and smiles.

"See, you're a nice guy, aren't you?"

"Shut up."

"Anyway, please, Shinnosuke. Well then everyone, I'm sorry. I'm going first. See you later..... Escape switch."

In an instant, Yousuke's body disassembles and disappears.

He was teleported out.

With a brooding face, Himi looks down at where Yousuke had disappeared from, and says.

"..... w-will Yousuke-kun..... be saved?"

I didn't answer.

Shiro says with a pained look.

"Don't worry. He'll definitely be saved."

That's a lie. With that kind of wound. He has clearly prepared himself for Yousuke's death. And even while on the verge of death, Yousuke was worrying about Shiro.

What was behind that drive of his? What in the earth happened between this three?

Shiro stands up.

And looks out the window.

"..... damn. Is this a high level labyrinth?"

I nod.

"Probably."

"What level do you think this is at?"

"Hmm. To show us the kind of lie that instills hope in us, it should be above rank 10, I guess? Maybe around rank 15."

"Then, lots will die."

"Yeah."

"But, we have to stop it. We have the lives of 3 million people in our hands."

"Well, an ally of justice will think that, I suppose? I'm going to escape if things get rough."

Shiro looks at me.

"Then, you can just escape now, you know? Why won't you escape?"

"Well. I guess I can still continue with this."

"Hmmmh."

"Besides, if we clear this labyrinth, there'll be an astounding amount of money right? I'm sure of that."

"Money again? You're always about that."

"Yeah. I'm all about that."

Shiro looks hard at me.

"..... what did Yousuke tell you?"

"Nothing. He asked me to protect you."

"..... ha, what a joke. He's a fool. Still worried about me when he's dying."

"Yeah. The trust between you guys is creepy. What happened between you guys? Don't tell me it's love?"

Shiro did not answer. Thus, I turn my eyes toward Himi,

"You know right? The three of you share a secret?"

"....."

Himi too didn't answer. In other words, a 'yes'.

"What's this? I'm the only one left out of the group. Doesn't matter though."

I have never intended to become friends with them, so I don't feel hurt or anything.

But, Shiro says.

"No, you're one of us. And besides, you saved my life."

"Then pay me for that."

"Like I said, we'll be real comrades once we survive this and return. I'll tell you my secret then."

"Huh? Why are you misunderstanding this and think that I even have any interest in you? Who the hell do you think you are?"

"Your father."

"Shut up."

"Then, let's go. No matter how high the rank of this labyrinth is, we have to clear it. Otherwise, 3 million people will die."

Shiro once again looks out of the window.

Then, we jump out into what used to be a schoolyard, into the plains of darkness.



The scenery outside is a harsh one.

It's completely different from the reports from the scouting corps.

In the first place, there isn't any school. What's standing there is just a building whose corridor we were in earlier.

The rest is made up of a vast amount of empty plains of darkness.

Red moon.

Blue clouds.

There're seven broken toy snakes, the same kind as the one that attacked us.

And.....

Three dead bodies of what used to be my classmates just a while ago.

Two girls.

One guy.

"....."

They were probably Gunjou's comrades. I can recognize their faces.

Even after how she cried about not letting anyone die while she was barfing from her nervousness, her comrades got done in just like that. Of course, this is a situation that can't be helped. Even though it's something that can't be helped, I wonder what kind of face did she have then? Was she on the verge of tears, or did she put up an unaffected front, desperately still doing her best, I wonder.

However, it's pointless to try imagining that, so I look at my surroundings.

Behind me, some distance away, a gigantic castle towers. A huge, castle in Gothic style. I don't know how many floors that castle is made up of. At any rate, it's huge. Trying to find the diseased girl in there would be like searching for a needle in the haystack. No, in the first place, it isn't even certain that she's inside that castle. The distinction between truth and lie isn't clear.

I say.

"Himi."

"Hyauh!? Eh? E-E-Er-Erh, y-y-yeess....."

She utters in strange surprise. For some reason, her face is red.

I cock my head to the side, and ask.

"Eh, why're you so surprised?"

"..... erm..... w-well, this is the first time..... that you called my name."

"Huh?"

"Erh no, you told me that I'm depressing and not to talk to you, so, I'm really happy."

"Haah, I see..... more like, isn't it strange to have that kind of reaction under such circumstances?"

"I-I-I'm sorry."

"Never mind. Do you have Mapper-class magic loaded?"

On hearing my question, Himi ponders with a thoughtful look on her face before replying.

"..... are you asking me whether I have any magic that can be used to locate the location of the diseased girl?"

"To make it short, yes."

Himi answers.

"Please forgive me. I don't have any magic that can be used to explore the entire labyrinth given its vastness."

"Tch. You're really useless."

"..... I'm sorry."

Shiro then says.

"Don't blame Himi. In the first place, we never expected such a turn of events. Besides, a thing like the diseased girl deceiving the scouting corps has hardly ever happened before ---"

It is just like what he said.

Therefore, a team which is only made up of three members, Shiro, Himi, and Yousuke, cannot afford to load up such a pointless magic. The three of them can only have up to eighteen slots of magic in total. They cannot afford to load up a magic that is used for exploration of the labyrinth when it should have already been done.

If there is someone who can afford to have such a magic, then it would be the Miss Noblewoman who have plenty of free slots available.

"Then, among those in Gunjou's group ---"

But, at that moment, Himi says from the side.

"I'm already on it."

"Hn?"

"Sumi-chan --- ah, I have a friend by the name of Sumioka Sumi-chan, and she should have been tasked by Gunjou-san to fully load up with map exploration magic ---"

"Horhh."

"And I've loaded a magic that allows me to detect the position of my friends into my 《Headphone Fuzz》. And have already activated it."

Himi uses her finger to trace a trail of light as she manipulates her 《Headphone Fuzz》.

I look at her.

Seems like she's a pretty smart girl. Even though she wavers meaninglessly at pointless things, right now, in this hard-pressed situation, rather than feeling flustered and fretting, she is dealing with it precisely and rationally.

Himi points her finger up at the sky of darkness and says.

"..... Intimate switch."

I sputter involuntarily. The name of the magic that allows one to know the locations of friends is 《Intimate switch》. Of course, the one who named the magic wasn't Himi. The one who developed the magic should normally give it a name that is most efficient in getting a reaction from the brain to activate it but --- this particular developer must have a pretty bad personality, I suppose. We might click well together.

Himi activates her magic.

A three-dimensional grid model appears in the air, and beside it floated two arrows that form a cross. One of the arrows is pointing north while the other is pointing to the sky.

Furthermore, in the center of the three-dimensional grid model, the words 『Himi』 can be seen.

Beside that is 『Shiro』.

In front of them, probably in the direction of the castle, is a group that is made up of around ten people. In that group, the words, 『Sumi』, is moving.

"Found it! They are really in that castle!"

Himi says happily.

But I'm bothered by something else. Beside the words 『Himi』 and 『Shiro』, 『Shinnosuke』 is written.

I ask in displeasure.

"This magic should only display friends right?"

"Ah, yes."

"Then why is my name there? I don't remember becoming your friend."

Once again, Himi's face flushes red in embarrassment.

"E-E-Erm..... it's because that just now, you called me..... by my first name."

Seems like that's the condition behind this magic. Anyone who calls the user by her first name gets marked as a friend.

I see, that could be seen as intimate.

"Don't make that face as if I'm really your friend."

I say but, with her face still red, Himi continues.

"I-I'm sorry. But erhm..... normally, my magic gets activated whenever I want to add a friend..... but it doesn't recognize the other person as a friend unless that person accepts me from the heart --- so, just now, when it recognized you, I was really shocked."

"Aah?"

My face couldn't have been more sullen than what it is now. Indeed, just now, for an instant, I might have more or less felt some sort of meaningless sympathy for her. When Yousuke was wounded, both Himi and Shiro wavered. But, to have sympathy getting taken advantage of and marking me as a friend without my permission is unbearable.

With a grinning face, Shiro puts his hand on my back,

"Somehow, I don't hate you that much anymore....."

"Don't touch me, idiot."

I brush away his hand.

But Shiro continues to smile.

Himi, with her face still red,

"Y-Y-You know! I'm really happy to become friends with you, Shinnosuke-san!"

"Huuuuuuuuuh? Don't screw with me."

I groan and clutch my head.

"Whatever. It's tiring to be around with you guys. Let's move on. We don't have time for pointless stuff like this right?"

"Yeah. That's right."

Shiro nods and starts running.

I too, start running and follow after him.

We are heading towards the castle.

The place where the diseased girl is.



The gates to the castle are open.

There is no one inside.

The gray floor and walls are made of cold stone.

There is a vast amount of space and the pillars are tall.

There should be stairs that lead down and stairs that lead up, and according to Himi, Gunjou's team should be on the upper levels, so we

need to find the stairs that lead to the upper levels. However, there are no stairs in sight.

"Where are the stairs? Shall we split up and search for them?"

Said Shiro. Naturally, that option is not recommended. With just a team of three people, we can't have one person too many if we get assaulted by the enemy.

However, even so, we don't have the time to search for the stairs at a leisure pace.

"Fine."

I say.

"In the first place, I don't need any friends anyway. Shiro and Himi will head to the right. I will head to the left."

Shiro looks at me.

"..... will you be fine by yourself?"

"Of course. I've assumed that people won't brazenly become friends with me and have a balanced slot configuration of magic just for that."

"Ah....."

Himi utters as she looks at me, but I ignore her.

Shiro then continues.

"I see. Then, we'll search for three minutes, and we'll meet back up here if we don't find anything. Get it?"

But I smile.

"What kind of plan is that? Are we girls who need to go pee in a group? There's no need to meet back up here. The group that finds it will continue upwards. There's no time. The group that's on the wrong path will follow after the group that got it right. Am I wrong in that?"

Shiro immediately nods.

"..... you're not wrong. We'll go with that. Hey Shinnosuke."

"Uhn?"

Shiro looks straight at me --- with his red eyes and says.

"..... don't you die okay? I hate to have my friends die on me."

Are you referring to Yousuke? I wonder whether Yousuke's already dead? With that kind of a wound. It's possible. Or, are those words that came from experiencing someone else's death?

Anyway, Shiro seems to hate having his friends die on him.

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes, and smirk.

"Ohhh. For someone like me who doesn't have any friends, I don't know much about such feelings."

"You're lying, aren't you? Your words may be irritating, but you're really a good guy. Even though you're acting like a solitary guy, you really want friends. Am I wrong?"

"Huh? You can go to hell."

But Shiro grins and says.

"I don't want to. I won't go to hell. That goes the same for you. It's a promise."

Upon saying that, Shiro lightly hits my chest twice with his fist, and smiles.

"Anyway, let's stay alive and clear this labyrinth!"

With that, Shiro starts running towards the right. Himi too, looks at me with a worried face,

"Please be careful, Shinnosuke-san."

She says.

I'm a stranger, and yet you make such a worried face. It's like you are forcing those feelings of friendship down my throat.

I look at her with half-opened eyes, and then, while running off to the left, murmur.

"..... even if you tell me to be careful."

In this crappy, rotten world, what should I be careful of, and how careful should I be?

While running, I twirl the tip of my right finger.

Twirling, twirling, tracing a trail of light in the air.

I'm keeping the tip of my finger fluid so that I will always be ready to activate my 《Headphone Fuzz》.

"Hn, Hnhn~ hn, hn ~"

While matching my utterances to the rhythm, I adjust the reaction speed of my brain.

In order to fight alone.

In order to live without any friends.

In order to be able to laugh mockingly at the weakness and coziness of the thing called friends.

"....."

Following that, I survey the inside of the castle with half-opened eyes.

This castle is indeed huge. On top of that, I have no idea where the diseased girl is at in this castle.

"Perhaps, it's impossible to save the 3 million people of Kanagawa Prefecture."

Of course, since I'm not an 《ally of justice》 in a manga or a special effects film, seeing 3 million people whom I've never seen nor known dying is nothing than looking at a fire burning on another island.

Thus, I've planned to escape immediately if my life is in danger. Even if my allies were to die before me, I would escape with a smile.

More like, such a strength is needed and called for in such a place.

Since if you die, everything will be over.

And if I die, it will be over for my little sister.

Because I don't think that anyone in this world would save my little sister.

"..... but yet, comrades? Friends? Don't make me laugh."

I grin foolishly.

As I'm grinning, I see the stairs from the corner of my eye.

A short distance away, I can see a staircase winding around a huge pillar.

"..... found it."

I mutter, and just as I'm about to raise my voice to shout out to Shiro's group about the stairs,

"....."

I stop.

Reason being, I can see a person flying out from behind the pillar with the stairs. What's flying out is merely the upper half body of a person. His upper body is wearing the same 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 uniform as me. He has an armband that said 『Class 3』 . He's not my classmate.

Furthermore, from the shadows of the pillar, the one that had sent the upper body of that guy of the same school year as me flying appears.

It's a huge monster that stands about three meters tall. It has horns protruding from its head, and wings like those of a bat. With a muscular bulk and black skin.

In other words, it is the standard model for what is known as the devil in this world today.

That devil is holding an ax. The ax has blood on it. Clearly, from more than a single person. Since my armband is only showing the number of students left from 『Class 5』 , I have no idea how many students of 『Class 3』 had been killed by it.

But, for now.

"....."

I just look at that 'devil', and give up on telling Shiro about my location.

More like, the 'devil' has not noticed my presence. If so, I should just ignore it and head upwards. There might be other students from 『Class 3』 behind that pillar but, I'm not obliged to help them, nor do I have the time.

Well, if they don't want to die, they can just escape immediately. If they were to develop superhero symptoms and finally die from exhibiting their meaningless sense of heroism, then they shouldn't complain about it ---

However, at that moment, a voice rings out.

"Ah, damn, it's fast..... hey monster, that's enough..... aah jeez!"

It's a voice that I know.

It's the voice of a certain girl whom I met at the interview, as well as in the corridor today.

Kiryuu Kiri.

Kiri appears from behind the pillar. With long madder red hair. Large pupils. A slender body, and breasts that seem ready to burst open her sailor uniform.

In her hand, she is gripping a sword that looks like a **Japanese sword**, born out of magic. With that sword, she is receiving and stopping the gigantic ax of the devil.

"Kuhh, this is heavy jeez!"

While grimacing, a tight smile surfaces on Kiri's face.

Gahn, gahn, gahn, with her sword, Kiri blocks the blows from the ax, which clearly, is being swung with a force that no human can receive.

"Guh..... ah, jeez."

The performance of the magic she's using looks to be pretty high. A second-rate magician would definitely have died by now. But, even so, it seems like she won't be able to hold out for long.

The devil raises its ax high up. Kiri readies her sword with both hands. And receives the blow. Endlessly.

"Uwah, this is not good....."

Kiri says but still a smile surfaces on her.

"Kidding. This opening is a feint ~. Aihara-san, Satou-san, please use your reinforcement magic now ---"

But, her words stop there.

The reason is because, for some reason, on the other side of the pillar, the rest of the 『Class 3』 students have all started activating their magic simultaneously.

And the magic they are using is ---

"Escape switch."

"Escape switch."

"Escape switch."

Kiri's classmates are escaping one after another.

"Wha, wait wait wait, this can't be happening right! We, we're definitely friends right! Hey, didn't we promise one another!"

Then, a girl answers.

"S-Sorry Kiri-chan. B-But, such a scary place, it's no longer possible for us."

"Huh?"

"If we don't get out of here, we might not be able to get out of here anymore..... so, sorry!"

With that, all the students disappeared. On the armband of Kiri's slender left arm, the ☆ marks disappeared at once, and in an instant, only one remained. Meaning that Kiri is the only one in her class remaining in this labyrinth.



"Wait..... you must be kidding me. Uwaah, crap....."

The monster swings its ax down. Kiri swings her sword up right away.
Gahn, a loud sound rings out,

"Hnah, fuhwah..... I can't absorb much of the power anymore....."

Gahkun, Kiri's knees buckle under the weight.

"Crap, the power absorption magic seems to be reaching its limit..... my
n-next magic..... my next magic, I won't be able to make it..... ah."

But I grin at that.

I grin foolishly.

I grin in delight.

They would never think of saving others.

All of them live only for their own gains.

All of them live only for themselves.

In that case, if one can't bear the weight of words like 'comrades' or
'friends', one should not go too far in fooling around others.

And right now, Kiri has been abandoned by such friends and is on the
verge of getting killed.

"Ha, haha, hahahaha, this is how it should be. This is what humans are
like."

Laughing, I activate my magic. The song of magic flows from my
《Headphone Fuzz》 and fills my brain.

【In an instant ♪ In a flash ♪ In the time of a flash ♪

The flash of time, the flash of an instant ♪ In an instant ♪ In a flash
———】

"..... Acceleration switch."

I accelerate my body. The magic activated and accelerated my flesh. I can
accelerate for just one second. Within that second, I proceed to use
another magic.

Dancing my right finger. Selecting a song. The song flows into my head.
The cursed chant flows.

【Sliced, shredded light ♪

Shredded, ripped-up light ♪

Abnormal, ruthless, extraordinary light ———】

"Demon Sword switch ---"

I take a knife out from my pocket. From the center of the knife, a sword with the color of darkness starts extending. This magic will confer its magic to any object touched, and transform it into a demon sword.

The power that would be conferred is dependent on the nature of the object that is touched. One would not know what kind of power it is unless one tries it. That is why this is a magic that is extremely difficult to use but, because it is possible to invoke all its different powers by changing the target object each time, if one has the time to test this general purpose magic, it could possibly make up for the limitation of having only six slots of magic.

However, there is no time now.

Thus, I chose this knife, which I had already tested the conferred magic beforehand.

Two special properties are conferred to this knife.

One is giving it the blade of a normal sword.

And the other is to allow the user to find the point where one can deal a fatal blow to the opponent with the strength of this sword,

"..... Assassination property."

I order the knife to see through the weak point of the devil. Upon doing that, a red target point appears before my eyes. The point is at the center of the back of the neck of the devil. It seems like there is a soft spot at the back of its neck. I jump towards there.

The devil notices me. Its golden eyes catch sight of me jumping in mid-air, and its eyes widen in surprise but,

"Ha, you're too slow."

I am holding the demon sword in a backhand grip. I step onto the left shoulder of the devil with my right foot, and stab my sword into the back of its neck in one stroke.

"Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!?"

The devil screams out in agony but, while twisting the sword, I say,

"You're annoying. Shut up for a bit."

I push the sword across and slice half of the devil's neck, then pull the sword to slice the other half of its neck.

Its head falls off. The devil collapses.

Just before the place where it's collapsing, Kiri, while remaining crouched, looks at me in surprise.

"..... y-you."

For some reason, she's looking up at me with a red face, and smirking, I say to her.

"Oh ~ my, isn't this the popular Kiri-san? Don't you have a ton of friends you made with your prided large breasts ~?"

Kiri's eyes widen in mute amazement. Following that, she makes a troubled smile. Even though she has been entirely covered in blood and stained with dirt, she is still beautiful. She had supposedly proclaimed that she would make many allies with her beauty --- but, right now, she has no friends.

Kiri stands up, pats herself and brushes the dirt off her skirt, then gazes at me and says.

"Jeez. What's with that? And to think that I have fallen in love in an instant with that prince-on-a-white-horse entrance..... I wonder whether we can do something about that trashy way of talking of yours."

"Ha, if you believe in such fairy tales, you should just go back to reading picture books."

"Ah-haha. But, Mr. Aloof Bastard."

"What is it, Miss Breast-Only Girl."

But Kiri smiles.

She says happily.

"Thanks..... for saving me. I thought I would be done in for sure..... so I'm really happy."

A few teardrops gather in her eyes. She might have really been scared. Or, perhaps she is feeling hurt after getting betrayed by her friends.

I look intently at her with half-opened eyes and turn my back towards her. It's not like I'm asking for such a development. I didn't save her to please her, but to make fun of her.

I say.

"Of course it's not free. After we get out of the labyrinth, I'll have you pay me a saving fee."

"Ah-haha. A prince who's corrupted by money huh. How unpleasant."

"And also, hand me all your intel. Among your classmates ---"

But, that alone was enough to convey everything to Kiri, it seems

She is a left-brain type.

A rational, composed type.

A sharp-minded type.

"There was one. One who had labyrinth exploration magic loaded."

I smirk and say.

"That person too, must be your friend of course?"

On saying that, Kiri's eyes roll around, puff out her cheeks, and puuh, she then gushes out and says.

"Again that obnoxious talk. You won't make any friends if you keep doing that, you know?"

"A lot say that."

"But yeah. She did say she was my friend. But she was one of those who readily abandoned me and escaped just now."

"It must be because you have a bad personality so she ran away from you."

Kiri smiles.

"Fufuh, maybe. Well, even for me, it's impossible to make a friend who's willing to risk her life for me in just one day."

"Because of your bad personality."

"Ah-ha, I'm going to kill you, you know?"

"Eh? You want to kill your savior me? You really have a bad personality huh."

I say but, for some reason, Kiri still gazes at me and smiles happily.

"Fufuh, hey Shinnosuke-kun."

"What?"

"I think I just found a cute side to you."

"Ah?"

I say with a scowl but, Kiri quickly goes on to ascend the stairs.

"But right now, it's not the time to think about such things, so let's save it for later ~. Let's go on ahead. Our destination is the third floor. The leftmost path of a three-pronged branch. It seems like our diseased girl is at the deep end of that path."

It seems like Kiri has no intention of escaping. Following after her, I say.

"..... didn't you see what's on your armband? The only person left in your class is you, you know?"

Kiri gives a small tap to the armband around her slender arm and nods.

"Ah, yeah. You're right."

"Then, you should be escaping right? Didn't you get the instructions? Once four stars disappear, the chances of success will be low, so escape."

Kiri turns around, and smiles.

"Of course, I heard those instructions."

"Then, disappear. Someone who doesn't have any friends here is a hindrance."

"Ah-ha, you too don't have any right?"

"I have a lot of them. Since, I have already made a hundred friends in this school."

"Fuh, fufufuh."

Once again, for some reason, Kiri looks at me with an affectionate, gloomy, smiling face. She gives a small tap on my chest and says.

"I don't really need a hundred friends. I'm actually really bad at getting close to others. But Shinnosuke-kun. If I'm with you..... I feel that we can save the world."

I smile with half-opened eyes. I think I see her ulterior motive and make a poke at it.

"What's up with you? So, that's what it's about? Making an advance on me to use me?"

However, on hearing that, Kiri's eyes widen a little in surprise.

"..... eh?"

Following that, she folds her arms in a troubled manner, ponders to herself, and in a soft voice,

"..... ah, ah, so that's it ~. You're seeing it in that way huh. I see. Well, after all, I'm no good at showing a cute side when I'm not acting. I have to be more careful."

She started muttering to herself but I couldn't hear her.

"What're you muttering about?"

She shakes her head hastily on hearing my question.

"Er, nothing. Just forget about what just happened. Let's redo this. Let's go with this. Let's work hard together and clear the labyrinth without escaping, so as to leave behind good results in our school records; we'll go with this direction."

"Huh?"

"All right, let's just go with this. And so ~, let's head to the third floor. I know the way."

On hearing that, I turn around, troubled as to whether I should call Shiro. This should be obvious but, cellphones don't work here. There is also no transmitting tower in the labyrinth, and any kind of scientific-based radio waves are cut off. Thus, unless one has a contacting magic loaded in one's slots, one would have to use the primitive method of calling out to another directly. And, if Shiro is still on the first floor, then he should be able to hear my shouting voice from the staircase here.

But of course, if I raise my voice, then the wandering devils might notice me, I suppose. Based on the one I encountered earlier, together, Kiri and I should be able to take care of just one or two of them but, we have no time to engage in pointless battles. Besides, Himi possesses the 《Intimate switch》. If she knows that I'm already on the upper levels, they should come after me, I suppose. At any rate, we are friends.

"..... hah."

I laugh mockingly, and move my finger. The time limit gets displayed in my mind.

Thirty-two minutes have passed.

According to the plan, we are supposed to be killing the diseased girl by now. But, there are still two more floors. We have way exceeded the appointed time.

"Hey Shinnosuke-kun, what's wrong?"

Turning around, Kiri asks me.

"Nothing."

"Ah, don't tell me that you have friends below?"

"I don't have any friends."

"Fuuhn. Hey."

"Hn?"

"Is it a girl?"

"Like I said before, what's up with you?"

"Aah, nothing, sorry. I made a mistake again. This is difficult. Puhh-puuh."

For some reason, seemingly discontented about something with herself, she went puhh-puuh. I don't get this girl.

"....."

I look at her with half-opened eyes, and sighing, ascend to the second level.



We are running desperately in the castle.

We have probably covered a distance of more than a kilometer.

Killed three devils. It was easy doing it together with Kiri. But, the stairs to the third floor has yet to appear. According to Kiri, we still have about five hundred meters or so.

"....."

I take a quick glance at the armband I'm wearing. The armband that has 『Class 5』 written on it. I notice that the ☆ marks below suddenly start disappearing rapidly.

They either died or escaped. One, two --- disappeared, and then three people at one go. With this, the students in 『Class 5』, including me, are left with only nine people.

Now, does this disappeared group include Shiro or Himi --- or even Gunjou? If Gunjou's comrades had died, would she be crying helplessly?

Grinning stupidly..... was something I did not do this time. With a somewhat tired face, I look up at the high ceiling.

"I really suck at running."

"Haha, what did you get for your 50-meter dash?"

"I don't have, the practice of keeping track of such useless stuff."

"Ohh. Me too."

"..... where were you from?"

"What about you, Shinnosuke-kun?"

"A normal middle school."

"Then, me too."

"Die."

"Ah-haha."

It seems like somehow, she isn't going to come clean, so talking to her would be meaningless. Well, it's the same for me though.

While running, Kiri points straight in front.

"After the bend around the corner ahead, we will come out into a large hall, and in the center of that hall will be a spiral staircase. At the top of it, should be the floor where the diseased girl is."

"Fuuhn. I see."

I look to the front.

And at the same time, just ahead along the corridor, a flash of light appears from around the corner.

The sound of explosion follows.

"Nooooooooooooooooo!"

Someone, a girl screams.

"Ayumi! Damn, what should we do about this!?"

It's the yelling voice of a young man.

And finally, Gunjou's voice sounds.

"Everyone fall back! I'll deal with it! And also, don't waver! It'll be fine! If you guys just leave it to me, I'll get rid of them in no....."

However, cutting her off, the young man's voice rings out.

"Don't f**k with us Gunjou! How many people have already died! In order to fulfill your ego of wanting to clear this labyrinth, how many people have already died!?"

"T-That is....."

"We are at our limits! I'm going to Escape!"

"Me too!"

"Me as well!"

"W-Wait! Just a little bit more!? Just a little bit more, and we'll save the 3 million people of Kanagawa Pre....."

Gaaaaaaaaaaaaahh, that howl of the 'devil' which we have already heard several times drowns out Gunjou's voice.

Several other howls follow. There seem to be a few of those devils on the other side.

"Uwaaaaaahh."

"Sa-Saitou-kun's dead!? It's over, let's bail!"

"Escape switch."

"Escape switch."

Then, Gunjou says in an anguished voice.

"Damn! Damn! What the hell..... don't screw with me, useless shit! Even though we are just a few steps away..... just a few steps away from killing the girl!?"

The stars on my armband disappear again.

Two people escaped.

One by the name of Saitou-kun escaped from his physical body for good.

Kiri, who is running beside me, says.

"My, what do you think? Do we pass them and leave them? Honestly, we don't really have time to save anyone."

I narrow my eyes, and reply.

"..... incidentally, those who are fighting there are my classmates, you know?"

"Ah, is that so?"

"Yeah."

"..... so? Are you the type who would save your classmates?"

I stare at Kiri with half-opened eyes, and once again look to the front. A thin smile then surfaces on my face.

"Now. I wonder what kind of face that always high and mighty, arrogant, vomit lady is making now?"

"Eh?"

I reach the end of the corridor. I kick the wall with my left foot, and change my direction.

To the right.

Before me is a huge hall.

The number of devils --- the black-skinned devils number three. There is one red-skinned devil that I have not yet seen before.

The surviving students are a guy and a girl.

"Ah, aaah, it's over....."

"W-We're also going to die....."

The two of them have completely lost their will to fight. The girl is sitting down on the floor. Of course, I couldn't blame them. After all, this is a high-level labyrinth. There are those weak-hearted ones who, after seeing their comrades, their classmates, killed before their eyes, can no longer move from the fear.

But, there is one more who didn't give up on fighting.

Protecting the guy and the girl, a girl who is short like a child, with a slender body, fair skin and blond hair, is the sole person standing between the two classmates and the four huge devils, and yelling.

"..... don't screw with me! Who do you think I am! I'm that Mizuiro Gunjou, you know! I will definitely not lose! There's no way..... there's no way I'll allow myself to lose here! Come forth, Sea Moon Wheel switch!"

She shouts. And raises her left hand. Jellyfish appear around her and start spinning. The devils swing their axes down on them. And slice the jellyfish apart. As an ax bears down on Gunjou,

"Kuh!"

One more jellyfish appears at her foot and using that as a foothold, she jumps into the air and dodges the blow.

And she then shouts.

To the guy and girl who are no longer able to move, and who are sitting down on the floor,

"You guys are no longer useful so just escape! I'll buy you time....."

At that moment, the red devil jumps. The red one is overwhelmingly much faster than the black ones. And just as its ax falls towards her ---

"D-Defensive Tyrant switch!"

Gunjou shouts with her hands crossed over one another. Before her hands, a current of water comes forth as if to surround Gunjou. It's probably a defensive magic. That water current strikes the ax of the red devil. Depending on the type of defensive magic, it's possible to cancel out the force of an instant killing blow but --- this is a type of wide-area defensive magic. With this, it wouldn't be able to completely neutralize the force from the ax of the devil.

"Kyah."

Gunjou falls to the ground from the blow.

She falls before the guy and girl. As her head hits the ground, her blond hair becomes stained red with her blood.

The pair behind look down at Gunjou, the one protecting them, with fearful faces, and finally activate their 《Headphone Fuzz》 .

But what they have activated are probably their 《Escape switches》 . They aren't even making an attempt to help the one who is desperately protecting them.

But that's a natural response. It's the reaction of a normal human being. Humans are all self-centered, self-interested creatures that need no friends.

Appearing to be well aware of that, Gunjou stands up again without even looking back. Perhaps as a result of getting her head hit, her slender legs are wobbling a little. She snaps her fingers three times.

Despite the fact that I am a short distance away, I too can hear faintly, the roar that has begun playing from the 《Headphone Fuzz》 . Isn't the volume enough to shatter her eardrum, I wonder. Boosting the cursed song beyond the capacity of her brain, she is trying to do something about her situation.

She mutters something to herself.

"..... d-damn, this can't be..... this isn't me..... this can't be..... if this goes on, Papa and Mama are going to abandon me..... no. Definitely. No way. Who am I? I'm a member of the Mizuiro House, am I not? I can't lose to something like this..... so, I'm going to do this. I can do this. I can definitely do this. Go, Gunjou. GO GO GO GO!"

Gunjou looks up, and with a ghastly, dismal, and fierce look, she glares at the devil and yells.

"Here I come monsters! I'm going to mess all of you so much till you die! Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

She spreads both her hands. Thirty jellyfish appear around her at the same time.

The guy and girl behind her murmur.

"Escape switch."

"Escape switch."

The pair readily abandoned Gunjou.

Gunjou is now alone.

But, as expected, she remains unconcerned. Fighting the devils all by herself. She dodges the ax of the first attacking devil, and using a jellyfish as her foothold, she jumps up into the air. She is aiming for the red devil. That's the right decision. Aside from the red devil, if she knows the weak points of the rest, then they aren't difficult foes.

Gunjou goes behind the red devil.

"A-All right! Sea Moon Wheel switch!"

She waves her hand with a jubilant face. The circular disc of the jellyfish strikes the back of the neck of the red devil.

That --- should kill the devil.

But, just when the circular disc strikes the surface of its skin, it stops. The force it dealt was insufficient to reach its weak point.

"You're kidding.....?"

Gunjou's face turns to shock. The axes of the rest of the devils approach Gunjou all at once. Gunjou can't dodge those. She is going to turn into mince meat.

However, a thin, smirk breaks out on my face as I mutter.

"--- Acceleration switch."

My body accelerates abnormally. To a level where Gunjou's movements couldn't match up to. To a level where even the red devil's movements appear to be in stasis. I accelerate for just a second, for a fleeting instance, and is right beside Gunjou. I forcibly grab her arm.

"Hi vomit girl. You look pretty unsightly now after all that boasting."

"What."

Her strong-willed almond shaped eyes widen. Those clear, pale blue irises catch sight of me.

"Y-Y-You....."

However, interrupting her, I give a strong pull to her arm. And hold her to my chest. Her body is slender and thin. Such a small body fighting by

herself, there is a limit to how foolish one can be. She must be a moron at heart, I suppose.

"Ah."

Ignoring her cry, I land on the ground. Then turn around. I know that the black devils wouldn't be able to react to my movements. They are trash. No big deal. However, the red one reacted.

By the time I turn around, its ax is already closing in. Of course, I too respond in kind. And deploy my defensive magic.

"..... hn."

However, there seems to be no need for that.

"Heyah!"

Before me, Kiri appears with her skirt fluttering, and stops the ax with her Japanese sword. It completely cancels out the power of the ax --- more like, her Japanese sword appears to possess such a capability. Though there should probably be a limit to the number of times it can completely cancel out the physical force of an attack.

That seems to be a convenient power.

It can be utilized in both offensive and defensive roles.

However, right now, I can't figure out from which labyrinth the technology from which the magic was derived came, or which was the organization that handled it. First and foremost, we have to deal with the devil before us --- and then terminate the diseased girl who is on the brink of killing 3 million people in Kanagawa prefecture.

My finger whirls in the air.

The slots in my brain whirl. As my 《Headphone Fuzz》 spins, I select my song.

I select the magic that can terminate the devils ---

However, at that moment, I stop my magic invocation again. Another person who can pose a threat to the devils appear behind the devils.

In the direction of the entrance to the hall. A man with grey hair, and mismatching red eyes.

It's Hishiro Shiro.

Shiro says.

"..... Penitence Severance switch ---"

An abnormally large knife appears in his hand. It's even much larger than what I saw earlier in the classroom. He starts running towards us, dragging his knife against the floor.

His knife has been extended to a length that's just nice to mow down all four devils at the same time. But he would have to make a really large swing. It's natural for the devils to end up turning around. And attempt to block his knife with their axes.

However, Shiro isn't the least bothered.

Rather, he smiles in delight,

"Those skimpy axes can't block against my sword. Cut down everything, Penitence Severance!"

Shiro swings his gigantic sword with an overbearing attitude. The axes are cut apart readily. And with that, four devil upper torsos dance in the air.

With that, it's over. All of them died.

But, because of his momentum, Shiro comes running all the way up to me,

"Woah woah woah."

And he is beside me. Looking at me.

"I finally caught up to you."

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes, and say.

"Are you an idiot? That kind of move normally doesn't work right? Firepower idiot."

"Normally, Yousuke would be protecting me."

"Aah ~."

I remember Yousuke for an instant. Is Mr. Glasses already dead? I wonder.

At that moment, Shiro looks down at the Gunjou who's in my arms, and says.

"So you guys..... are in that kind of relationship?"

Instantly, the Gunjou in my arms says,

"Say what!? No way..... hey, get away from me!"

Dohn, she hits my chest. I look down at Gunjou, and say.

"..... that hurts you know?"

Gunjou's face is beet-red.

"Hurry up and get away from me!"

As she is about to hit me again, in a rolling motion, I throw her down onto the floor.

"Kyah."

She rolls down onto the floor. And immediately gets up. She glares at me, no, at all of us, and says.

"..... w-w-what! Hey! Don't misunderstand! E-Even if you didn't come help me, I, would have dealt with all of them by myself!"

The way she's expressing what she wanted to say is really adorable.

I look down at Gunjou with half-opened eyes and move my finger thereafter. I instruct my 《Headphone Fuzz》 to display the remaining time limit.

As expected, Shiro ignores Gunjou, and calls out in the direction of the entrance to the hall.

"Himi! It's safe now. Come over here. Shinnosuke and the rest are also here."

Himi dashes out from the entrance happily.

"Thank goodness! Shinnosuke-san, you are okay right!"

Gunjou then shouts with an angry face.

"Hey! Why am I being ignored! I'll kick your asses!"

"Whatever."

"I'll seriously kill you!"

Gunjou sends her fist flying. At a pretty fast speed. That's right. At the very least, she's the one who dominated Shiro with her charisma and popularity and has been dubbed as the number one most capable magician in her class --- no, in the entire school year.

But, from the side, Kiri grabs the hand of Gunjou.

"Hey ~. Don't you think that this is not the time to be doing this?"

With that, Kiri's capability was immediately conveyed to the rest.

Shiro looks at Kiri.

Gunjou's expression changes as well. Glaring at Kiri with her blue eyes, she wrests her hand out of Kiri's grasp, and sends a hand chop at her. With that, Kiri and Gunjou spar with just their right hands in a flurry of fists and hand chops.

Gunjou probably appears to be slightly faster. If both of them use their full strength, then --- but before that even happens, Kiri draws a step back.

"Hey, wait a minute, why am I fighting with you?"

Gunjou narrows her eyes, grins, puffs out her chest, and replies.

"..... when a new person comes in, we have to first determine who is the better one, don't we?"

"Totally not interested."

"Then, subordinate yourself to me."

"Uh~hn."

Knowing that I should break them up and end this talk of theirs, I make my move and say.

"..... well, at the very least, if it's about breast size, the winner is clear though."

Instantly, with widened eyes that can't get any larger, Gunjou looks at me. For some reason, she brings her hands to her chest as if trying to hide them, and glares at me in indignation.

"Just saying but! I'm n-not I-like totally flat!"

"Liar."

"I'm not lyyiing! W-Well, even though I can't compared to the **holstein** here but, erm, I'm still growing!"

"Hey, who's a holstein? And Shinnosuke-kun, you said that purposely to stir things up between us right?"

I was seen through.

With a foolish grin, I avoid the reprimanding gaze of Kiri and turn around. And looks in the direction of Shiro and Himi. Himi had already activated her 《Headphone Fuzz》, using some kind of magic.

I asked Shiro.

"Is Himi doing a check on the third floor?"

"Yeah."

"And?"

"She's underestimating us. Once we go up, we'll find the diseased girl without a single guard."

"Isn't that convenient for us?"

"Yeah. Or, that the diseased girl is confident in her own strength."

There are two types of diseased girls.

The type that has tons of guards protecting her.

And the powerful type that's hard to deal with.

A labyrinth of the later type is much harder to clear. Since there's a possibility that the powers of the diseased girl could reach lethal, overwhelming, shockingly bizarre levels.

"..... I'm going to draw out the map of the floor above."

Himi extends her index finger. A light lights up from her finger, and using that to bore into the surface of the floor, she starts drawing the layout of the upper floor.

The upper level seems to be made up of a circular room. The stairs here lead up to the center of that room.

There is one enemy.

Only the diseased girl, Asahi Momoka.

Alongside the wall on the northern side.

Peering at that layout, Gunjou says.

"If the layout is so simple, there's no need to take the trouble to draw it out right?"

It seems like the meaningless dispute between Kiri and Gunjou had ended.

Himi replies.

"No, erm, I just thought that it would be a good idea to draw out the positions of the traps."

"Traps?"

Asked Kiri.

Himi nods.

"The floor of the above level is filled with drop-down hole traps --- and the remaining floor is like a gridded suspension bridge. So I'm going to mark the areas of the floor that we should not step on."

Tapping with her finger, Himi colors the floor with black patches. It seems like those black patches are the drop-down holes.

Shiro looks up at the ceiling and says.

"The drop-down holes are on the floor above this right? Then, if we fall through, we'll fall to here?"

But Himi shakes her head.

"With my magic, I can't tell the actual make-up and how things connect up but --- the chances of a fatality occurring on falling is 94%."

In other words, it would be over if one were to easily fall through.

With half-opened eyes, I look intently at the map Himi drew. While tapping my foot, I memorize the map and make several simulations on how to move around once we reach the level above.

There is hardly any time to memorize it.

The time limit is ---

"....."

I take a look at the time limit that had been called up into my mind earlier.

Seven minutes remain.

In other words, there is the possibility of 3 million people of Kanagawa Prefecture getting erased seven minutes later. Asahi Momoka would then become an 《Eternal Labyrinth》, get a code name, and become a tool that military organizations and countries would fight for the rights to it.

Of course, if we remain here, we would be assimilated by the 《Eternal Labyrinth》 and terminated.

Seven minutes remain.

Just seven minutes.

Normally, we should be escaping.

So, what will these fellows do?

As I look up, Gunjou says.

"..... just to say this up front, I'm the leader get it? It's natural right. As the one who's most capable in our year, I should be giving you instructions."

Shiro looks at Gunjou.

"Damn you, don't f**k with us. We are the ones who picked you up when all your allies were killed and you are the last one remaining, aren't we?"

"What? Then, why don't we decide who's the stronger one here before going up?"

"Hey, fine with me."

The two glare at each other.

But, frankly speaking, we don't have time for such foolishness. The two of them should also know this very well, thus, their outbursts just now exceeded the level of mere idiocy and were goddammit kind of idiocy.

"Ah ~ ah", I sigh out, look up at the ceiling, and advance towards the stairs.

Gunjou says.

"Hey, wait a minute!"

Shiro says.

"Wait up Shinnosuke!"

I reply without turning around.

"Nah. Why don't you guys just do what you like? I'll profit from this labyrinth all by myself....."

At that moment, my words got cut off,

"H-Hey, everyone, please listen to me!"

Himi raises her voice. Her voice was pretty loud that even she looks surprised by it.

I look at Himi.

Gunjou also looks at her.

Kiri also looks at her.

Shiro also looks at her.

As we all do that, Himi becomes increasingly nervous,

"E-E-Erm, I'm sorry. Ermmm..... my magic slots are all on support magic, and I won't be of any use from hereon, so when the remaining time is up on this floor, I'll probably Escape ---."

"Aah, I see. Then see you. Bye, thanks for your hard work."

Himi nods at my words.

"Ah, yes. Thank you very much..... wait, that's not what I want to say."

She raises her voice again.

"E-Erm, I'm a nobody but..... everyone here who has survived such a high level labyrinth is a really amazing person....."

She says to us with a teary face for some reason.

"Shiro-san is of course amazing, Shinnosuke-kun too, Gunjou-san as well, she's really incredibly strong --- and also....."

Himi's words trail off as she looks in the direction of Kiri.

Kiri waves her hand and says.

"Ah, erh, I'm Kiryuu Kiri. From 『Class 3』 . The rest of 『Class 3』 has Escaped so I'm left all alone here. Nice to meet you."

Himi then nodded and said.

"Then, Kiri-san as well..... all of you are really amazing for not Escaping from here."

Cutting her off, I say.

"So what? Make it shorter. Unlike you who's free, we have no time."

"Ah, ah, yes. Sorry..... erm, that is, I mean..... if everyone here properly work together, I think you will be the dream team of our school year, so....."

I continue after her.

"So please don't fight like idiots whose brains have turned to moss, and work with each other. Get it? Firepower Idiot and Vomit Girl."

Shiro looks at Himi with narrowed eyes.

Gunjou glares in my direction.

"I don't need you to tell me that....."

But I cut her off and tell them the time limit that is displayed in my mind.

"Six more minutes. We only have six minutes of a chance to duke it out with the diseased girl. But let me say this first, if the diseased girl is strong and it seems like we can't win, I'll immediately escape. And also, even if it seems like we can win, I'll Escape if there's only two minutes left."

"....."

"Even if someone's hurt or if someone's in danger, I'll just get out of here. I'll definitely not help anyone. I can't give a bunch of hypocrisy or sugar-coated words here. The things I want are money, fame, and authority. I'm interested in nothing else. The lives of Kanagawa's 3 million people? World peace? Hah. I don't care about those. I think it's insane to give everything I got for the sake of people I've never even met. So that's about it, I'm going up to claim the reward for myself but --- if there's any praiseworthy fellow here who wants to come along, please feel free."

And I start walking.

I start ascending the stairs.

Immediately, Kiri appears alongside me. While grinning, she says.

"Is it okay for me to tag along?"

"A money-monger huh."

"Ah-ha, not as much as you, Shinnosuke-kun. And a-also, erm, can I ask you about something?"

"Hn?"

"Shinnosuke-kun..... erm, are you dating that Gunjou girl?"

"Huh? What the hell's with that?"

"Because you know, you were carrying her like a princess ~."

Kiri pouts her lips as if she were a little displeased. It isn't evident to me as to what kind of motive she has to say such a thing. Is she trying to control me? Or does she have some other motive?"

At that moment, Shiro appears alongside me.

"Well, let's clear the labyrinth and visit Yousuke together after this."

"Yousuke, that guy, is probably dead right? Rather, if he's in heaven, you might get to see him there right?"

"You really are an unpleasant guy."

"Haha."

And lastly,

"....."

Without saying anything, Gunjou makes a really displeased face as she follows after us.

The ones going to the top are these four people. Himi is the only person remaining on the second floor.

In the end, nobody Escaped. Even though there are only five minutes remaining. Additionally, this is a high level labyrinth. Then, no one can imagine how dangerous the diseased girl above is. Despite having made the decision to Escape if things become bad, the chance of dying is high. But yet, everyone stayed. In other words, these fellows are missing a few screws like the crazy driver with his foot down on the accelerator; either that or, they are burdened with some special circumstances that didn't allow them to retreat.

"Well, at any rate, I'm not interested in the circumstances of others....."

"Eh?"

Kiri looks at me. I shrug my shoulders.

"Nothing. We're almost there....."

At the third floor.

I climb up, to the third floor where the diseased girl is.

And, at the same time when I'm in the process of ascending, the diseased girl who is alongside the northern wall comes into view. The diseased girl is like a puppet, with both her hands hung up by threads. Her vacant face hangs down. At the end of the threads, is a gigantic hand, with black skin

like that of the devil from earlier. That hand moves just a little. Right after that, the body of the diseased girl --- Asahi Momoka, starts moving with a few large jerks.



The girl's right hand gives birth to lightning.

While splitting the floor apart, that lightning is unleashed straight towards me ---

"Huh, so sudden damn! Acceleration switch!"

While accelerating with full power, I step onto the third floor.

Chapter 4 - About the Story of the Last Four Minutes

4 minutes remaining ---

With the map that Himi showed us called up into my mind, I run. In order not to fall into any of the holes. In order not to set off any of the traps.

The diseased girl is running amok. She is unleashing her lightning magic, which possesses an abnormal amount of destructive power, all over the place, endlessly. Making the fall-through holes meaningless. Most of the trap-ridden areas of the floor have been destroyed, leaving gaping holes.

A high ceiling. With supporting pillars. The width of the remaining grid-like floor is about two meters.

The diseased girl is standing on that floor.

With a crying, vacant face.

Tears flowing.

Yes.

The girl has tears flowing.

The color of her tears from her right eye are red.

Blue from her left eye.

Both her left and right eyes are also blue and red respectively.

Just like my little sister.

It's the exact same thing as Saki when she came down with the disease.

Seeing that, I waver a little. I remember Saki. At that time, Saki was clearly conscious of what was happening. Even when she was consumed by the disease, she let me escape. She called me Onii-chan.

And it is our job to kill that diseased girl who is conscious of what is happening. I narrow my eyes and murmur to myself.

"..... a stranger."

I murmur softly.

"She's a stranger. A stranger a stranger a stranger a stranger."

I slid a step to the side to dodge the unleashed lightning. Letting my finger dance in the air, and the cursed song flowing from my 《Headphone Fuzz》 jolting my brain.

【Sliced, shredded light ♪

Shredded, ripped-up light ♪

Abnormal, ruthless, extraordinary light ——】

"Demon Sword switch ---"

I take a knife out from my pocket. From the center of the knife, a sword with the color of darkness starts extending. And I then activate the special power that lurks inside the sword.

"..... Assassination property."

A red target point appears before my eyes. The diseased girl is captured in that target point. The weakness is the girl. It is not the hand of the devil that is controlling the girl, but the entire body of the girl is the weakness.

With half-opened eyes, I look hard at the fourteen-year old girl who has black hair and a demure face, Asahi Momoka.

A girl who was still attending school normally yesterday. A girl who had been smiling everyday in a tranquil, uneventful world made up of her parents, her friends, and a warm school life.

If that girl's body is destroyed, the world will be saved.

"Ha, haha..... as usual, what a disgusting sickness, hey."

As the sound of dry laughter escapes me, I switch my grip on the sword of darkness to a backhand grip.

3 minutes 30 seconds remaining ---

Shiro runs. Sundering the lightning with his giant knife. Slicing it apart. Slicing it apart. As he is slicing at them endlessly, a streak of lightning springs up from the ground towards Shiro's head.

"Uwah, damn....."

"Are you an idiot! Move aside!"

Gunjou kicks Shiro from behind.

"Guah."

While rolling on the ground, Shiro dodges the lightning. As his knife is disappearing, he starts preparing his next magic.

Gunjou spreads both her hands.

"--- Sea Moon Wheel switch!"

She summons multiple jellyfish.

However, as they are appearing, this time, it is Gunjou who gets assaulted by the lightning.

Kiri stands before Gunjou. And sunders the lightning into nothingness with her Japanese sword.

"I can perfectly defend you just eight more times so, use that opportunity to attack!"

"Naturally! And this time, I shall once again save the world with my power! Sea Moon Wheel switch!"

Seven circular discs of jellyfish attack the diseased girl.

The diseased girl tilts her vacant face a little, and raises both her hands. A curtain of lightning rises before the girl. The jellyfish of Gunjou strike the curtain and disappear.

"What! Didn't they say that she's weak against water!"

That kind of intel should have lost its credibility when we found out that this labyrinth is not a school based on the reports from the scouting corps.

Lightning flies.

Lightning flies.

Kiri swings her Japanese sword, defending Gunjou.

"Hn, kuh. Six more times!"

The diseased girl then smiles faintly.

"..... six times? Then how's this?"

About twenty masses of lightning appear before the girl at the same time.

"..... you're kidding you're kidding, sorry! I'm taking back my words! I can't defend against this. Help ---"

At that moment, I step in front of Kiri.

"Shinnosuke-kun!"

"Acceleration switch!"

My body accelerates. Accelerates. Accelerates. In a flash. In an instant. For just a second. My speed is even faster than that of God.

The girl unleashes her twenty lumps of lightning.

As if they were convulsing from an illness, my eyeballs are vibrating. My eyes are capturing the weak points indicated by the red targets displayed before them, that show where I should cut for each cluster of lightning.

Then, I cut those weaknesses with my sword of darkness. Cut. Cut. Cut, cut, cut cut cut cut cut cut.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

In one second, I sundered seventeen masses of lightning and my acceleration comes to an end.

"Damn."

"Duck Shinnosuke!"

Shiro shouts from behind. I roll my body to the front. Shiro says from behind.

"--- Thousand Deities Flash Of Light switch."

It was the magic that gave birth to the spear that has a drill-like tip from before. The spear passes over my head. It tangles up with the three

lightning masses and pierces through them. It might just reach the girl --- I thought, but before the spear, the girl is nowhere to be seen.

The girl is right beside me. Electricity runs through her body. She is so fast that I could not see her move. She grabs the chest of Shiro with her right arm. And pierces through his chest with her finger. Tosses over Shiro's body. And it flies to the ceiling and crashes into it.

"Gahah."

He falls down, with half of his body falling through one of the trap holes. He clings to the floor with one hand, but after receiving so much damage, he cannot pull himself up.

"Guh..... uuh....."

1 minute 40 seconds remaining ---

No good.

It's over.

It's not just a matter of insufficient time. The opponent is someone we should not have trifled with.

"Everyone, Escape!"

I holler.

From behind me, Shiro activates his 《Headphone Fuzz》.

I can also see Kiri and Gunjou behind her activating their 《Headphone Fuzz》. Everyone understood from those movements just now. It's impossible to clear this. It's a hopeless situation.

I start preparing my Escape as well.

1 minute 15 seconds remaining ---

The girl looks at Kiri who is facing her.

"Ah-haa, I won't let you escape."

She unleashes her lightning. Unleashes. Unleashes.

"Damn....."

Kiri receives them with her Japanese sword. Receives. Receives. She can only receive two more attacks.

Taking action, I swing my sword towards the girl. As if she had eyes behind her, the girl dodges it easily. The girl then turns around.

"Shinnosuke-kun!"

Kiri cries out in alarm, and as she is about to come help me, I yell out.

"Don't come Kiri! Stand back!"

The girl's lightning-coated fist approaches me. If that hits me, I might just die. However, it does not hit me.

"--- Acceleration switch!"

I kick the chest of the girl and accelerate backwards, retreating.

A little faster than the girl, I put some distance away from her.

Kiri looks at me and makes a surprised face.

"What, don't tell me you haven't started using Escape magic!?"

Of course I was going to use it. However, in case of emergency, I was going to finish listening to the Acceleration switch, then start listening to the cursed song of Escape switch. Therefore, I will be leaving this area slightly later than the rest, I suppose.

But it's not a problem. If I retreat backwards while accelerating --- I will make enough time for me to escape.

The cursed song fills up my brain. The curse for the purpose of getting away. The curse for the purpose of escaping.

If my Escape magic is already proceeding at this rate, the other three should have completed theirs by now.

"I'll be done in a moment! Let's leave this place!"

I yell.

Shiro then says in a pained voice.

"..... Escape switch."

Kiri looks at me worriedly and says.

"It's a promise Shinnosuke-kun! You must escape no matter what! Escape switch."

42 seconds remaining ---

Gunjou shouts.

"Escape ---"

But her words stopped there. The girl has fired a bolt of lightning. This bolt of lightning strikes Gunjou's 《Headphone Fuzz》. Her headphone breaks.

"Ah....."

Was what Gunjou could only utter.

Since without a 《Headphone Fuzz》, she will not be able to escape from this labyrinth.

Of course, anyone else who uses the 《Headphone Fuzz》 can bring another person out together at the same time but --- for that to happen, in order to bring another person out, one has to restart the cursed song. And in our current situation, there is no time for that. To top that, Gunjou and my relative positions are in the worst possible places.

With the diseased girl in between us, we are directly opposite of each other.

And in the meantime, my Escape magic has also been completed.

33 seconds remaining ---

"This must be..... a joke."

Said Gunjou with a dazed look. With a jerk, her knees give way and she falls to the ground. Her face contorts with fear and tears fill her eyes.

"N-No way..... I..... I....."

I look hard at Gunjou with half-opened eyes. The usually arrogant, high-and-mighty, domineering Gunjou has a face filled with fear.

The diseased girl closes in on Gunjou. Slowly, slowly, as if cornering an injured, immobilized prey, she closes in.

I have no obligation to save her. Nor is it my duty to do so. More like, in this situation, the choice of helping her does not exist. In a place like this, anyone who talks about helping a girl or saving the world is just a fool. A hypocrite. A fake Mother Theresa. A piece of trash that has no purpose, no reason to live, and one who does not think about the future.

Thus, the only choice is to Escape.

I activate my magic.

Gunjou notices me.

She notices my smirking face.

With her contorted face, Gunjou says.

"..... damn transfer student..... what're you laughing about!"

With her face contorted in chagrin, Gunjou says.

"You're pissing me off! Even till the end, you're smirking, that foolish grin of yours..... mocking me, mocking everyone!"

With her face on the verge of tears, Gunjou says.

"Don't screw with me! You're laughing at my failure right! You must be thinking, 'this is all you've got after always acting like you're better than everyone else!?' You must be celebrating at the prospect of one less rival, piece of trash of a guy!"

And finally, with a quavering voice, a voice that seems to indicate a resigned realization that everything is over for her, Gunjou says,

"..... hurry up and disappear from here! It's all..... over for me, so! So, at the very least..... I'll bear the rest of it here, so, hurry up and escap....."

But, I interrupt her and say.

"Shut up, vomit-girl."

And I smile again.

Smirking.

Smirking, smirking, while laughing at my own foolishness with a feeling of being vexed with myself,

"--- Holy Sword switch."

I murmur the name of an offensive magic. A silver sword appears in my right hand. A shining sword clad in light. As if it were something wielded by a hero or a knight, a sword of hypocrisy.

"..... what."

Gunjou's words stop. As if she has just seen something unbelievable, her eyes widen.

"Y-You idiot! What're you doing!? What about your Escape!?"

I have already dispelled my Escape magic. I can no longer escape. In order to escape now, I have to save Gunjou, and kill the diseased girl.

Perhaps, as a result of comprehending what is going on, Gunjou looks at me with a red face.

"I-Idiot! Dummy dummy dummy dummy! Why're you doing this!? Y-You ---"

The tears of fear and despair that have been accumulating in her large eyes --- now overflow from them. Gunjou is sobbing like a frail, lovely girl,

"..... Y-you're such a big idiot, aren't you!?"

While getting berated by her, I smirk.

"Yeah, you're right. I won't deny it. This is the lowest and worst form of hypocrisy. I'm well aware of that."

I raise my sword, and dash towards the diseased girl like a fool.

8 seconds remaining ---

The diseased girl turns towards me. And looks at me in wonder. Then waves her hand. Lightning springs out. I dodge the first one. Somehow, I manage to dodge the second one as well, with my shoulder grazed.



"Guh-ah."

I can tell that a gash has been made in my flesh.

And that I will not be able to deal with the next attack. Besides, there is no time for me to set up my Acceleration magic, and also in the first place, Holy Sword switch consumes too much resources from the brain, and I cannot activate another magic at the same time. That was why I did not really want to use this magic. In the first place, I will not be able to hit the opponent with such a sluggish sword and to top that, this magic is incomplete.

But, for me to be able to somehow do something to the diseased girl, this is my only option.

Thus, I swing my sword with all my might. Aiming at the diseased girl who has monster-like strength and is standing clearly on the grid, I swing my brilliantly shining sword at her.

However, obviously, the diseased girl's movement is faster. With a hand-chop, the diseased girl aim for my heart.

"Shi-Shinnosuke!?"

Gunjou clings to the girl from behind. The girl's movement slows down a little. No, her aim deviates a little. Her hand-chop pierces into my side. Gouging into my organs. I do not know how much damage I have taken from that.

Gunjou looks at me,

"Nnnooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

She shrieks, but unconcerned, I ignore her, and unleash my sword of light.

"Sun-ddeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeerrr!"

The sword touches the back of the neck of the girl. It stops right there. It did not cut through her skin. With her other hand, the girl has stopped the sword.

The girl laughs.

"Haha, it's over for you ---"

3 seconds remaining ---

But, I too laugh.

"No, it's over for YOU. Since what you stopped was just my hypocrisy."

The blade of the Holy Sword that the girl has blocked with her hand shines with an excessive brilliance and disappears. The blade, which is a fake portion of the sword that holds no power at all vanished.

What remains is the real form of the sword.

Something shorter than the blade of a knife, the part that resembles a paper knife pierces through the chest of the girl.

"Huh....."

The girl says, but it is already too late.

After that, my consciousness enters the diseased girl. The power of the Holy Sword switch is to show an illusion to the opponent who is stabbed by it, and performs brainwashing on the opponent.

It is a magic that is specially made to deal with diseased girls, developed for the sake of saving my little sister, Saki.

It is a magic that forcibly brainwashes the diseased girl. To cut her heart away from the illness and save the girl as a result.

"..... ah."

I forcibly enter with my consciousness.

"..... ah, ah."

Forcibly, forcibly, entering the girl.

"..... ah, ah, aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh."

With the power of the Holy Sword, the power of hypocrisy, the power of deceit, in order to forcibly violate the heart of the girl, I force my way into the girl.

"....."

What's inside is darkness.

It is darkness.

In the corner of the darkness, a girl sits by herself. Hugging her knees to herself, a fourteen year old girl sits alone.

I call out to her.

"..... are you, Asahi Momoka?"

"....."

The girl looks up at me. She has a lovely face. Her expression ever changing, she looks like a gentle kid.

"Who are you, Onii-chan?"

"I'm just a passerby, a hypocrite."

"Hmmmh. So, why're you here?"

"..... to kill you."

On hearing that, the girl smiles.

"Aah, I see. It's because I came down with the disease."

"That's right."

"Thank goodness. It was really painful. I was suddenly hijacked by something that looked like a devil, and could no longer control myself."

"Yeah."

"My family was also swallowed by the labyrinth..... so I've been waiting for someone to come save me. I really don't want to kill everyone."

"I understand."

"I really love Papa, Mama, and my little sister Sakura....."

"Yeah."

"So, I really don't want to kill everyone."

"Yeah."

"So..... please kill me, Onii-chan. There's no more time."

Asahi Momoka stands up and spreads both her hands. Facing her, I raise my hand. In my hand, I hold a knife. A black knife. A knife for killing the girl.

She smiles and says.

"Hey Onii-chan. It's really great that I get to meet a kind person like you at the end, Onii-chan."

I smile.

"Hah, what's with that? How am I a kind person?"

The girl smiles again. Smiling at me gently, she looks up at me,

"How, you say..... Onii-chan, since just now, haven't you been crying for my sake?"

"....."

With tears flowing, I look down at the girl. I look down at the girl who has not done anything wrong, but, was just unlucky enough to contract the sickness. Just like my little sister. I look down at the girl who, up until yesterday, has been smiling innocently, quietly, peacefully, gently.

"..... sorry."

In a quavering voice, I said.

"..... my magic is still incomplete..... it's because I'm useless..... it's because I'm powerless..... I'm still yet..... unable to save you."

In a hoarse voice, I said.

The girl says.

"Onii-chan, it's not your fault."

"..... sorry."

"But Onii-chan, you're saving me from this pain."

"..... sorry."

"Onii-chan, you're saving my family."

"..... sorry."

"Onii-chan, the time's already....."

At that moment, I swung my knife.

And with that, it was over.

Everything was over.

The girl said in the end.

"Thank you, Onii-chan."

She had a smile on her face.

But she had disappeared.

Her life had disappeared.

'Thank you' my ass. In the end, I am just a piece of trash who cannot save anyone. A piece of trash. Just someone who is powerless, useless,

"..... and a hypocrite, am I not?"

The darkness disappears.

The darkness of the girl disappears.

The labyrinth that has extended from the girl as its center, speedily turns back to the real world.

"Ugh."

Driven out of the darkness inside the girl, I return to reality. With tears flowing, my eyes widen.

The bright light dazzle my eyes for an instant.

The smell of reality.

The feeling of being alive.

"....."

This is no longer the labyrinth.

I can see the blue sky.

The hustle and bustle of the street.

The sounds of zooming cars.

The voices of people.

The girl died, the labyrinth disappeared, and time has returned to Kanagawa Prefecture. I am right now in the center of some **scramble intersection**. Maybe it is because of me that the cars are unable to move, causing horns to blare.

Someone is hugging to my chest.

"Shinnosuke! Shinnosuke!"

It's Gunjou.

The girl who usually has a strong-willed look is clinging on to me now, her face wretched from crying.

"S-Someone! Someone quickly call the ambulance! Please! All of you! All of you have your lives saved by this guy!!"

With tears in her eyes, she screams desperately.

She is really noisy. My stomach is hurting. Which reminds me, my organs have been gouged. I might just die.

"..... haha..... I, can't laugh, at Yousuke."

"Shinnosuke!?"

Gunjou looks at me. Her face is a complete mess from crying. Her strong-willed eyes, and fair skin, have turned red.

"Are you, awake!? Shinnosuke!"

"....."

"We did it! We..... no, you saved the 3 million people of Kanagawa....."

Interrupting her, I say.

"I'm not interested. I killed a person."

"Eh....."

"And I'm tired. My stomach hurts, so I'm taking a break from school today."

"Huuh? Hey, you....."

Ignoring her, I look up at the sky.

I look up at the sky over Gunjou's disheveled blond hair.

Even though the girl is dead, as I look up at the calm, tranquil sky, I find it to be vexingly endless.

I gaze at the boisterous street, busying itself as if nothing had happened, unbothered by the death of the girl.

Then, I say.

"..... hey Gunjou. I have a request to make of you..... is that okay?"

"..... w-what?"

She looks at me with a nervous face.

Smirking, I open my mouth.

"....."

I made several requests of her. Why are you asking me to do all that?, her face asks me, but I no longer have any energy to explain them to her.

This is my limit.

I lost too much blood.

I look down at my stomach. Blood is flowing out from the gaping hole there.

"..... aah, damn. I'm a fool."

Murmuring that, I lost consciousness.





I killed the girl.

But the world has not changed.

I killed the girl.

But the world has not changed.

I killed the girl.

That is why the world has not changed.

We kill girls day after day, just to create such an unchanging world.

And then ---



Before I knew it, summer has ended.

"....."

Half a month has passed since then, I think.

I have been passing my days in boredom, in an uninteresting hospital ward.

It is a private ward.

It is a high-class ward specially prepared by 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》. It seems like Shiro, Kiri, Gunjou, Himi, and myself who stuck around the high-level diseased girl till the very end and somehow managed to deal with her, were awarded a special bonus and special privileges. We are somewhat treated like heroes.

The corporations that are based in Kanagawa Prefecture and Yokohama city also rewarded the school. But that money will not go into my account. Damn f**king school.

"....."

The door to the ward swings open.

"Yoh, Shinnosuke. I'm here."

It is Shiro. Himi is just right behind him.

I scowl and say.

"I didn't call for you though."

"I thought that the hospital food probably sucks, so I bought some hamburgers."

"I never asked for that."

"Then, you don't need any?"

Shiro is holding two fast-food bags. The smell coming from them clearly belongs to that of potatoes that have been instantly cooked, are cheap and bad for the body, and something that should not be brought to a hospital.

I reply.

"..... I could use some."

"Haha. Make sure you eat them secretly. Otherwise the doctor's going to get mad at you. Yousuke, who's warded at the floor below, got yelled at earlier."

Yes.

That four-eyes who slipped past death, is still alive. On top of that, his wounds appeared to be less serious than mine and it seems like he will soon be discharged. That four-eyes is a tough one.

I look at Shiro with half-opened eyes.

"How did you smuggle them in with this smell?"

"Haha."

Shiro puts down the fast-food at the side of my bed.

Himi asks worriedly.

"How are your wounds?"

I answer in exasperation.

"You asked that yesterday. Do I look like someone who can instantly heal up like an amoeba?"

"Ah, ermmh, I don't mean that....."

"Then, don't ask that anymore."

"S-Sorry....."

"And also, don't come here anymore."

"Erm..... then, I'll come again tomorrow."

Himi appears to be fearful, but it seems like she is someone who will not listen to what is told to her. In the first place, there should have been a sign hanging outside that says 'No Visitors'. I made a request for that, and besides, it has only been three days since I completely regained consciousness. But yet, what is up with these visits that seem to hold no regard for the patient's well-being, I wonder.

Himi smiles.

Shiro also smiles.

"I can't smile at all."

My face contorts, but paying no heed to that, Shiro says.

"I heard from the doctor. It'd be a while before you can be discharged?"

"Don't ask such things without my permission."

"Let's work together again when you return."

"No thanks. If you want me to join you ---."

"I have to pay you? You are a piece of trash as always."

Shiro smiles. For some reason, he has a somewhat sad look on his face.

Then, he looks down at me,

"..... I'll come again tomorrow."

"Like I said, I never asked you to come."

"See you tomorrow."

"Shut up."

Together with Himi, Shiro leaves the ward. The door closes.

With half-opened eyes, I continue looking in the direction they left.

"....."

From Shiro's expression, he might have heard the condition of my wounds from the doctor. That f**king doctor. Isn't it against the law to leak out a patient's condition to outsiders? If I sue him, maybe I can get some money off him.

Now that Shiro and Himi have left, the room is quiet. Snap, snap, I snap my fingers alone in the room.

The sound of boredom and peace.

The sound of idleness and quiet.

"....."

After some time has passed, the door opens again.

When I turn my eyes toward it, there stood Kiri. She is carrying some fruits. Today sure is a gloomy day.

I look at Kiri and say.

"I have no business with big breasts."

Kiri grins and says.

"I heard you've awakened. Shall I peel an apple for you?"

"What's attached to your chest are melons though."

"Fufuh, can you keep quiet already ~?"

Smiling, Kiri enters. And sits in the chair beside my bed without my acknowledgement.

"Yah, are you feeling okay?"

"Of course. I was so energetic that I ended up in the hospital because of that."

"Ah-haha. If you're that well, then you should be fine. By the way, what's this smell?"

Kiri says as she looks around the ward.

I reply.

"Potatoes."

"Whoeh?"

"Shiro brought them."

"Ah ~, Shinnosuke-kun, do you prefer those to fruits?"

"Not really."

"Then....."

Said Kiri. And she gazes at me. Her eyes are slightly teary. With a face that seems a little feverish but yet filled with sadness and pity, she gazes at me,

"..... then, what kind of thing will make you happy, Shinnosuke-kun?"

Kiri says to me. Then, she extends a hand in my direction.

I grab that hand of hers strongly.

"..... ah."

Glaring at her with half-opened eyes, I then say.

"..... like I said the other time, what's with you?"

Kiri's face is close. She is so close that I can feel her breath on me. She is so beautiful that it seems like she can steal one's eyes away, and her breasts are annoyingly huge.

Kiri receives my stare and says.

"..... there was a circular at school today."

"What is it about?"

"..... that Shinnosuke-kun..... that you can no longer fight because of your injuries and will thus be dropping out of school."

I narrow my eyes and say.

"..... aah, I see. That explains Shiro's reaction."

"Hey Shinnosuke-kun. What in the world happened after that? After I got out --- how did you ---"

Dohn, I grab the shoulders of Kiri.

"Don't get so close to me."

"Ah."

She makes that kind of sound again. She gazes at me with a look of surprise, thereafter, she lowers her voice to a whisper and says.

"..... at school, Mizuiro Gunjou-san has become a star for killing the diseased girl. They said that you were attacked by the diseased girl and failed to escape --- and then, Gunjou-san saved you."

"....."

"And, her corporate sponsors increased again. Right now, they number twenty."

"Ohh. That's amazing."

On saying that, Kiri backs off a little and narrows her eyes.

"Yeah. That's amazing..... but is that true?"

"....."

"From what I saw of Gunjou-san's ability, she shouldn't be able to do anything in that kind of situation. What if, the truth is that your positions were reversed..... and that you were the one who saved her..... and got seriously injured because of that, then....."

Cutting her off, I say.

"Then, what'll you do?"

"..... then, I won't forgive her."

"Huuuh? What's with that? We aren't in that kind of relationship right?"

But, Kiri's face contorts slightly in sadness, pouts her lips, and puts her hands to her chest.

"..... e-ermm."

"Ah?"

"..... the truth is, I'm not really good at this, so it's kind of difficult for me to say this but."

Her face becomes a little red. Biting her lip, she says hesitantly.

"I, I, erm."

"..... what is it?"

"I, am, erm..... i-in I-love with you..... I think."

She says to me.

I stare at that red-faced Kiri with half-opened eyes and say.

"..... huuh? What kind of trap is this?"

"It's not a trap!"

"I'm not interested."

"Hey, I, really plucked out my courage to confess to you, and to hear that kind of reply ---"

"It won't work. You might have won over your classmates with that but --- the outcome should already be clear right? Every one of them abandoned you and escaped, didn't they?"

I smirk.

On hearing that, Kiri's face becomes slightly on the verge of tears.

"..... erm..... even I won't use such an unscrupulous method..... and I never felt the need to anyway....."

"So?"

"..... aah, but the timing is really bad, I guess. Sorry. I take that back."

"Haven't you always be doing that?"

"Ah-haha..... right. You're right. I'm sorry. But, those feelings are....."

"Shut up. Even if they were real, I can't accept them. Frankly, I have no interest in meaningless stuff like love and romance. Neither do I have the time for it."

For an instant, Kiri's face contorted into one that was on the verge of tears. But it disappeared immediately. She is a person who is capable of such a thing. That is probably why she is no good in expressing herself. She has probably received some kind of training to help her control her feelings. Which organization is she really from?

Kiri grins and says.

"I was kidding ~. Were you surprised?"

"Not really."

"Everything was a joke ~."

"Hmmmh."

"Though the truth is, it's not a joke."

"Whatever."

"Yeah. You're right. Sorry. Well then ~, see you tomorrow."

"Don't come again, you're irritating."

"Ah-haha..... then, see you."

She stands up.

And leaves the ward.

I stared after her absentmindedly for a while,

"..... ha..... romance, love, friendship, youth, and stuff like these..... this place is just full of idle people."

I smile.

In the first place, I have no right to have all those things. And they are also worthless to me. And I have not even saved my own little sister. And I have been killing girls. What would such a person like me, do with things like love, romance, and friendship?

Besides.

"....."

I pull over my comforter. Turn over the stomach area of my patient shirt. A cicatrix-like line where the wound was sewed up on my stomach can be seen. But that wound is not the problem. Fortunately, my organs were successfully fixed up. The problem lies in the fact that, as a result of the injury, some nerve has been damaged and consequently, I can no longer move my right foot.

"..... hn."

I sit up and start coming down from my bed. I attempt to extend my leg to outside of the bed. But the leg did not respond. It was as if it belonged to someone else. It is like a heavy, iron lump. Bam, I slip out of the bed and fall to the ground in an unsightly way. Hitting my head.

"....."

This is the price of hypocrisy. The price of acting righteously, futilely. I knew it, one who risks one's life to save the life of another, is just a piece of trash who fails to think ahead.

"..... ha, haha."

I laugh foolishly.

"Hahahahaha."

I laugh smirkingly with half-opened eyes.

I sit myself up, lean my back against the wall, and laugh to myself, absentmindedly.

Then, at that moment, I felt a slight presence. Again, outside the door. Seems like someone has come.

"Ha, how popular can I be?"

I mutter in exasperation. The door should open soon. I do not have any time to get back to the bed. At any rate, this ward should be rejecting visitors by right, and I have not yet recovered from my injuries. There is no way I can move that agilely.

Despite all that, the door that has a 'No Visitors' sign slowly opens.

A short, fair-skinned, blond-haired girl is standing there.

It is Mizuiro Gunjou.

She is just standing there.

"....."

Casting her eyes downwards, with a pained and anguished face, she looks at me sitting on the floor.

"..... Shi-Shinnosuke."

"Vomit-girl huh. What did you come here for?"

I called her vomit-girl. But she did not get angry. She merely looks at me with a troubled look, and in a quavering voice,

"..... I, I....."

She says.

"What?"

"..... I..... I've come to see you."

"Ah, okay. Thanks. But I don't need that, so can you go back?"

On hearing that, with a slightly fearful face, she says.

"..... e-erm..... if you wish for that, then..... I'll do just that, but."

"Then please go. See you. Farewell and bye-bye."

I wave my hand.

"....."

But, she did not move. With a brooding face, she remains standing rooted to the spot.

"What the hell? You aren't done yet?"

"Erm....."

"Hurry up with it."

"I did as you told and took credit in the extermination of the diseased girl in my report."

"I see."

"I also got the largest share of the reward."

"That's great isn't it? Did your Dad and Mom praise you as well?"

I ask smirkingly but, Gunjou gazes at me without replying. And proceeds to bombard me with her doubt.

"..... but, why did you do that? Under those circumstances..... under those terrible circumstances, you didn't need to save....."

"Before that, answer my question first."

But, ignoring me, she continues.

"And also, I don't get the reason behind letting me take the credit....."

"I don't want to talk. In the first place, I'm not obligated to answer you."

"B-But."

As Gunjou enters the ward, I say to her.

"Hey, don't just enter on your own. You will make the ward stink with your puke."

"....."

Gunjou's face becomes teary. But it probably was not due to all the excreta talk I labeled on her. She is looking at my leg.

My immovable leg.

Seems like she already knew about my leg.

In a quavering voice, she says.

"..... I heard about you leaving school."

"Ohhhh."

"..... just now, I heard..... from the doctor that your leg won't be able to move again. That's why, that's why you have to drop out of school."

"Hmmmh. So?"

At that moment, Gunjou's face contorts. Contorting to the verge of tears. Tears start piling up in her strong-willed, almond-shaped eyes. The tears flow out readily. Seems like this girl is really a crybaby.

With tears flowing, she looks at me intently, then says.

"I-It's..... because of me, that you....."

But, interrupting her, I say.

"Don't be over-conceited about yourself. I made that decision with my own free will. It isn't your fault."

"But."

"Besides, when you enroll into that school, you too signed an oath of self-responsibility right? One's injury in the labyrinth is one's responsibility. It's one's own responsibility even if one dies. So why're you are crying so much? It's really unsightly."

"But!"

She starts to approach me.

"Don't come!"

I holler.

Gunjou's small body trembles with a start. She stops. With fearful eyes like those of a cat, she looks at me.

I receive her gaze with half-opened, smirking eyes.

"I don't have any business with you. So don't come any closer."

"....."

Crying, Gunjou looks at me with a face that says she does not know what she should do.

Strong-willed eyes.

Weak-willed eyes.

Lovely but yet depressing, pitying eyes.

"Can you leave?"

"..... Shi-Shinnosuke."

"Hurry up."

"..... I-I'll be back..... again tomorrow....."

"No. More like, I'll be discharged by then."

"Eh..... t-that can't be possible. It's not possible in your current wounded state, was what the doctor....."

But, cutting her off, I say.

"There are too many uncalled visitors, so I'll be transferring to another hospital."

"..... ah."

"Yeah, but that too isn't your fault. It's all because of my good personality that I have many friends, you see ~"

Gunjou is not smiling.

I am unconcerned.

I reach out for the bed, and prop my upper body up. Standing with my left leg. My right leg did not move.

Gunjou's expression contorts again.

"I, I can understand that you don't want to see my face but....."

"I don't have that much interest in you to the point of not wanting to see your face."

"B-But, erm..... you were the one who saved me."

"Yeah ~, that's right. Then, pay me. Pay me the fee for saving you. That'd be enough. And you can forget all that hypocritical guilt."

"..... I, I."

"Then, I'll send you my account number later, so it's about time for you to go right?"

"Shinnosuke."

"See you, bye bye."

"Shinnosuke!"

Gunjou shouts angrily.

I look at her intently with half-opened eyes.

"..... what?"

"..... don't, transfer to another hospital..... I..... I won't come here again."

"....."

"I'll make the rest stop coming here as well, so don't transfer to another hospital."

"....."

"And also....."

"There's still more?"

With a imploring, pained look on her face, Gunjou says.

"..... you should blame me more. If you continue to act kindly towards me after all that, I'll..... I'll....."

I laugh at that.

"Ha, haha, what the hell. If I don't blame you, you will be stricken with guilt?"

"T-That's not....."

"All right. It's your fault. So pay me. Then we'll call it....."

"That's not it! It's not about that..... if you keep treating me like this..... then, I'll....."

However, ignoring her, I press the button to call for a nurse. This ward is a private ward meant specially for politicians, and a nurse comes over right away.

"Erm....."

The nurse is poking her face into the room, looking at the crying Gunjou, and feeling a little disconcerted.

"How can I help you?"

Gunjou frantically wipes her tears off with her hand. And makes her strong-willed face. In front of others, she is desperate not to let her weakness show and puts up a bluff. However, unlike Kiri, she cannot erase her emotions right away. She cannot control her emotions. Her lovely face is filled with a mix of self-assurance and uncertainty. Her long lashes are wet.

"..... i-it's nothing! I accidentally pressed the button. We are busy right now, so you can leave....."

"No need to leave. I was the one who called. I'll be discharging from the hospital. Make the arrangements."

Gunjou looks at me.

"W-Wait. We aren't done....."

"We're done. Frankly, it's vexing to have a stalker like you following me around."

"Can I ask for a crutch?"

"..... at any rate, we have to get the permission of the doctor first....."

"Aah, then, I'll just bear with this hospital for now, so just get me a crutch."

The nurse nods and leaves.

Gunjou then says with a tinge of happiness.

"You're not leaving?"

"No, I am. Who cares about getting permission."

"Ah....."

"More like, you should be going home too. Don't tell me you want to stay by side and provide for me for the rest of my life?"

I smile while saying that, but, Gunjou gazes at me and says.

"..... if..... that's what you wish for."

She is serious. That is how hung-up she is on what happened in the labyrinth the other day.

"You are getting too worked-up, duuummyy."

"....."

"Besides, you'll get over it after a while."

"....."

"Or, is it because that you managed to become the hero even after getting many of your comrades --- your classmates --- killed, and causing me to get an injury that can't be healed..... and you want to at least do one good thing to compensate for all that?"

"....."

Gunjou's face contorts again into one that is on the verge of tears. Bull's eye. She is the strong-willed, arrogant type who feels a strong sense of responsibility; a foolishly kind girl.

But,

"That kind of thinking of yours is a needless favor. Your classmates died because they were weak. My injury was a consequence of my own decision. You have not the slightest responsibility in it."

"B-But....."

Tears fill her eyes again.

Vexed, I touch her white cheek that seems almost transparent enough to see the blood vessels beneath it, and say.

"Don't make such a weak-looking face, Mizuiro Gunjou. Aren't you the superstar who has twenty corporate sponsors? You should smile, and take in with self-assurance all the money, fame, and power. Don't look back. Once you look back in that school, you'll die, you know?"

"..... Shi-Shinnosuke."

"..... hey, ah ~, what the hell am I saying? I told you to go back, jeez."

Gunjou looks up at me. With her teary face. Her cheeks are slightly red. She seems about to open her mouth but, I interrupt her by pinching her cheek.

"Ah ouch!? Wh-What are you....."

"..... I'm a little tired. Even though my wound's not better yet, I'm seeing too many visitors today. Can I sleep?"

"Ah, ah....."

"And also, even if you go back, I'll still be in hospital tomorrow."

Instantly, her eyes widen.

"R-Really!?"

"Yeah. So go back. Quickly go."

"Eh, ah, erm..... o-okay. I'll go. I'll come back again tomorrow..... so."

I sit on the bed. It is true that I am tired. I wave my hand to signal Gunjou to leave.

"Quickly go."

She leaves the ward,

"I'll come back tomorrow.....!"

After saying that, she closes the door.

She said the same thing as Shiro, Himi and Kiri.

Jeez, I don't get it. I don't get their purpose behind saying that.

What the hell's wrong with them?

Who the hell are they?

"How free can those people be....."

Once again, I sigh out tiredly.

The ward has returned to silence.

The machinery sound of the air-conditioner. The soft sound of my breathing. That's all I can hear.

And the faint smell of hope remains in the room.

Is it the scent of Gunjou? Or the scent of Kiri, or Shiro, or Himi?

Love, romance, friendship, lover, friend, youth, peace, justice, dream, girls, friends --- a sweet fragrance.

A halting, seductive fragrance that seems to ensnare the legs of the weak, seventeen year-old me.

Telling me that there's no need to work so hard.

That I can live more freely.

Excuses, reasons not to do, reasons not to go on, appear in my weak heart.

"..... ha, hahaha."

My legs had always been ensnared.

My chest had always felt like it was going to get crushed.

Whenever I see the young men and women of my age having fun and laughing amongst themselves, a worthless temptation will be born from the depths of my heart for an instant, and I will be on the verge of losing to it.

"....."

No, surely, without a doubt, all of those who have dived into labyrinths probably have had their legs ensnared before.

Shiro is definitely carrying some kind of darkness.

Kiri too, for sure, has some kind of a big secret.

That goes for the same with Gunjou. Otherwise, they could not have gotten that strong.

But yet, they all talk about pointless friendship. About love, about romance. Crying and laughing over worthless things. Taking a meaningless detour to come talk to me.

But, what's all that for?

What are they thinking of?

"..... even though reality..... the world, is such a terrible place."

Or don't tell me that, at that time, they all have another kind of strength that should exist only in fairy-tales?

"..... there seems to be no end to their company."

I smile again.

With half-opened eyes, smirkingly..... I smile, with a tinge of sadness.



Once I got my crutch, I immediately went outside the hospital.

Evening.

The sun is already rather low, with its rays slanting.

The sky is red like blood.

The carpark is huge and seems like it can accommodate two hundred cars. However, not one car is in sight. What I can hear is the faint sound of the engine of an approaching motorbike.

I have heard that engine sound before. Its speed slows, followed by the sound of changing gears. A motorbike with a girl riding on it appears at the entrance of the carpark.

It is a strange-looking girl, who is wearing a white coat over her school uniform.

Sanae Yayoi.

Fifteen years old.

My cousin who is in charge of a research lab of Taikou Pharmaceuticals. Yayoi stops her bike before me, and takes off her helmet. Her long, black hair falls out.

Yayoi smiles, and says.

"..... Onii-sama..... I saw your medical report. Your leg is injured, it seems."

"Ha, you've come to make fun of your cousin's injury? You really have a horrible personality."

"..... I'm not happy about it at all. However, I thought that you can finally rely on me with this, Onii-sama."

"I won't."

"But, that leg of yours, if it's Taikou Pharmaceuticals --- if it's us, we'll be able to fix it right away."

"....."

"Since our corporation has lots of unpublicised magic technology that are exclusive to us."

"....."

"Now, let's go. Please hop on. I've already prepared your room in the research lab, Onii-sama....."

I cut her off and say.

"Hey Yayoi. Can I ask you something?"

"What is it?"

"You know."

"Yes."

"..... about the incident this time, how much do you know about it?"

After saying that, I glare at her.

But Yayoi's expression remains unchanged.

I continue.

"..... the one who investigated the labyrinth was you guys, Taikou Pharmaceuticals. The scouting corps made a mistake in their scans. The report saying that it was a rank 0.4 labyrinth was a mistake. That was probably a rank 20 labyrinth right?"

"I'm sorry. With regards to the labyrinth raid this time, I'm not too sure of the details..... why don't you follow me back to the corporation to ask them about it?"

However, ignoring her, I continue.

"But can a rank 20 diseased girl deceive Taikou Pharmaceuticals? The truth is, you guys already knew what kind of labyrinth that was right?"

"Erm, Onii-sama....."

"You knew that but yet made us raid it. But, what kind of experiment is that? What were you guys doing there?"

"Onii-sama!"

"I'm not your big brother."

But, unconcerned with my remark,

"Onii-sama, please hear me out. It was a necessary experiment."

Yayoi readily admitted to it.

I am reminded of the dead bodies of several classmates for an instant. I am reminded of the dead Asahi Momoka, who thanked me.

And all that was for a necessary experiment, she said.

I narrow my eyes, and smile.

"..... you guys killed that many people just because of an experiment?"

"It couldn't be helped."

"Haha."

"It's also a necessary experiment for the sake of saving your little sister Saki, Onii-sama."

"....."

I stare at Yayoi.

Flashing me a smile, Yayoi says.

"But, I'll tell you about everything when you come back to the lab with me. So please come along with me."

She extends a hand towards me.

I look at that hand.

"..... if I say no?"

Yayoi answers.

"You don't need to be so wary. Onii-sama, you are an important person to me..... and also the corporation has a high opinion of you now."

"....."

"As the labyrinth this time was a man-made one --- we were the ones who forced the disease onset in Asahi Momoka, so we were able to monitor everything that happened inside."

"Whatt!?"

Man-made labyrinth?

Force the disease onset?

What the hell is this girl talking about?

"Thus, after knowing how excellent you are, how you managed to deal with a rank 20 labyrinth and came out of it alive....."

If all that has been seen by the trash, then, letting Gunjou take all the credit became meaningless.

Yayoi continues happily.

"The corporation definitely wants you, Onii-sama. They are saying that they want you as an in-house magician or researcher. Of course, I already

knew something like this would happen --- after all, I already knew how amazing you are since a long time ago!"

I look at her face.

Her face that is beaming from knowing that her cousin is recognized by the organization she belongs to.

Her face that is helplessly jubilant from the fact that her cousin managed to survive and killed the diseased girl, Asahi Momoka.

It's a 'natural' face. Such things are probably natural to the world she has been brought up in, Taikou Pharmaceuticals.

No, it is the same everywhere. It is the same for any country, any company. Human experiment is a natural thing. Thrusting anyone out of the way, for the sake of personal gains, is a natural thing.

Love, romance, justice, silly, childish words like these are meaningless.

"..... haah."

I sigh out in exasperation. Following that,

"But, what if, I still tell you that I can't go with you?"

On hearing that, Yayoi answers with a smile.

"That's not possible. You can no longer escape from us. I was the one who fiddled around and blocked the nerves of your leg."

"..... aah, so this is your doing too huh."

"Besides, you don't have your 《Headphone Fuzz》 right? When you were wheeled into the hospital, I secretly took it from you."

Yayoi slowly takes out my 《Headphone Fuzz》 from the pocket of her white coat, and smiles.

"It'd surely be dangerous to fight a first rate magician who could clear a rank 20 labyrinth but --- even if it's you, Onii-sama, you're just an ordinary person without your 《Headphone Fuzz》."

"....."

"But, even so, just in case, I've brought along the special forces magicians from the corporation."

Suddenly, at that moment, murderous intent fills my surroundings. Seems like some kind of magic had been employed to hide their presence. Eight men, clad in military uniforms, appear around Yayoi. Each of them is wearing a 《Taikou Pharmaceuticals' Specialized Type 2》 《Headphone Fuzz》 .

They are not any extraordinary magicians. If only I have my 《Headphone Fuzz》 , then no matter how many they have, I could take them on.

But right now, I am unarmed. Useless. Trash. I do not have a single 《Headphone Fuzz》 to use against my well-prepared opponents.

"Damn."

I take a large step forward with my crutch. And start to reach out to grab the 《Headphone Fuzz》 in Yayoi's left hand.

However, with a delighted smiling face,

"In an instant, in a flash, in the time of a flash ♪ --- Acceleration switch."

Yayoi murmurs. It's slower than mine. It's probably another magic that's simpler than mine. But, with a speed that's overwhelmingly faster than the human me, she takes a step backward. Staying away from me. Even though I'm unarmed, she's perfectly, and completely on her guard against me.

I can no longer hope to win against her.

With my target gone in an instant, I readily fall to the ground. Unable to do anything.

Vexed, I look up at the sky with half-opened eyes.

The sky that enters my vision is red.

With the sun rays slanted, red like blood.

I knew it, a worthless thing like hope doesn't exist. Things like love, romance, friendship, justice, all these indulgent illusions don't exist in this world.

"..... ha, haha, hahahaha."

I should have known. It's all over the instant I let my guard down.

The only one who's trying to save my little sister is me. The rest are just self-centered, arrogant hypocrites who have no interest in others.

I have no comrades. I have no friends. If I don't shoulder everything myself and fight on, I definitely won't be able to save my little sister --- I should already have known that, but yet, I ended up erring easily in making my choice.

Saving Gunjou.

Saving the world.

And consequently, I can't save what's important to me.

"..... jeez, what the hell have I been doing?"

I say in a tired voice. I thrust my hand up towards the sky. The hand that couldn't catch hold of anything.

Upon doing that, something resembling chains wrap around it.

"Restrain him!"

The special forces magicians of Taikou Pharmaceuticals say. One after another, chains that have been born from magic wrap around my arms, legs, and neck.

Yayoi says.

"Don't be rough. He's my cousin."

Shut up, I wanted to say but could no longer talk.

It's over.

With that, it's over ---

That's right, I thought.

However, a strange voice rings out.

"..... Penitence Severance switch."

The low voice of a man.

And suddenly, right before my eyes, a large knife appears. It easily cuts apart my restraining chains.

"W-What happened!?"

Before the shouting magicians, a man with gray hair and red eyes appears. It's Shiro.

"What the f**k are you guys doing huh?"

Yayoi looks at Shiro and scowls. She orders her subordinates.

"Hey, What're y'all doing!? Hurry up and restrain my big brother!"

The magicians activate their 《Headphone Fuzz》. They seem to be activating some kind of offensive magic.

However, before those magicians, one after another, young men and women wearing the uniform of 《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 appear.

Kiryuu Kiri.

Yuuyami Himi.

Endou Yousuke.

Mizuiro Gunjou.

All of them are wearing special 《Headphone Fuzz》 that normal magicians are unable to use. Even if the opponents have thirty special forces magicians of Taikou Pharmaceuticals with them, they probably still won't be able to do anything to Shiro and the rest. Since the people on my side are all made up of extraordinary idiots who have actually risked their lives to raid the labyrinths filled with all sorts of hellish and monstrous menaces.

But, I have no clue why they are here. I have no idea why these idiots would take the trouble to come save me.

Even though they are strangers.

Even though they are all strangers.

"..... what in the world..... what in the world is up with you guys?"

I ask.

I really don't get it.

The actions of these fellows are too much of a contrast to the dark, cold world that I knew and lived in.

But yet, with faces asking, why are you asking that?, Kiri, Himi, Yousuke, and Gunjou turn around towards me.

And lastly, with a face saying, that's a given,

"Ah? Why, you asked..... obviously it's because we're your comrades."

Shiro said some stupid stuff to me.

"....."

Comrades.

Comrades.

Comrades.....

For an instant, I'm at a loss for words. Replying to those baffling, incomprehensible, childish, silly words,

"..... don't, screw with me..... you guys are giving me goosebumps."

My voice..... quivered.

All of them smile back happily. Beaming in delight. Damn. They are really pissing me off.

Maybe it's because she has realized that her situation has become unfavorable, Yayoi starts backward.

Kiri asks.

"..... hey, Shinnosuke-kun. Do we need to go after her?"

She is already wielding her magically conjured Japanese sword. It's a purple sword, different from the one she used in the labyrinth. It's a different magic. From her tone, it seems like she's saying that she can catch her opponent even if she takes her time in giving chase.

I say. With a slightly raised voice.

"Yayoi. Put down my 《Headphone Fuzz》 ! Otherwise, we'll go after you!"

With that, Yayoi stops. And turns around. Gazing at me with icy eyes,

"..... Onii-sama, I'm your only ally, you know?"

"Shut up."

"..... just by getting a few --- just by getting a few comrades, what good will it do? Will this change the world? Has this world..... has this world that the both of us have been looking upon..... turned into such a naive, and gentle place?"

Said Yayoi.

I narrow my eyes.

She's right. She's right on all fronts. The world isn't so cheerful. If it were, then Asahi Momoka wouldn't have called me kind. My little sister wouldn't have fallen ill. People wouldn't have died or wailed.

But still, even so,

"It's none of your business what I thought. And in the first place, I've said this numerous times but I'm not your big brother."

"..... is that so?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I'll leave it at that for now....."

She puts my 《Headphone Fuzz》 down onto the ground.

"..... I'll leave it at that for today and go home. But, I won't give up."

With that, Yayoi disappeared. The Taikou Pharmaceuticals' magicians too disappeared.

It all happened in a moment. Appearing suddenly, and disappearing right away. The motorbike falls. I wonder whether she will send someone to retrieve it later.

Shiro looks down at the motorbike whose owner was gone, then dispels the knife in his hand. Then, turning around to face me,

"So, what kind of mess were you cooking? Who's that?"

I shrug my shoulders.

"Nothing. It's nothing."

"That wasn't nothing at all. Ah, don't tell me she's your ex?"

"No."

"But, she said she wouldn't give up....."

"Shut up. That's my cousin."

Yousuke then says,

"Seriously, you're a pervert! To think you'd date your own cousin....."

Cutting him off, Kiri says.

"What what, I can't let that go."

Gunjou too glares at me.

"..... is that true?"

"About what?"

"About the perverted matter of you dating your cousin."

"Huuh?"

I started but gave up. I no longer have the energy to talk sense with this guys.

So, with a tired face, I say.

"Yeah. Yes. That's right. It's pretty amazing. Our relationship is really over the top. Our immorality is at the level of getting me expelled if the school gets wind of it."

"Whah."

"Whah."

Shocked looks appear simultaneously on the faces of Kiri and Gunjou, and lastly, Himi strikes her hand with a pohn, and says with an earnest face.

"Aah, is that why Shinnosuke-kun had to drop out of school?"

What the hell is wrong with her?

Furthermore, they all start chattering away among themselves. They started chattering about something that's meaningless, worthless, and silly.

And finally, Yousuke says.

"By the way, Shinnosuke."

"You really were born to be a person who loves acting casually with others huh."

"Well well. Anyway, I've been meaning to ask you this but, are we still in a precarious situation? Will the guys just now come back....."

I shake my head to that.

"I don't think so."

They probably won't attack this many magicians who are capable of producing results from their labyrinth raids without ample preparation.

Yousuke nods and says.

"I see. Then, let's continue our talk, ah, let's do it at that place. The place we agreed on."

"Huh? Agreement? What's that?"

"Let's go to a family restaurant. I'm already tired of the hospital food."

I of course reply right away.

"No thanks."

Gunjou is on the same side as me.

"Me neither."

But Shiro grabs me,

"We saved you, and this is your attitude?"

"Hah, you're pretty condescending, Shiro."

I resist with half-opened eyes, but Yousuke smiles.

"That's right, that's right. We are a bunch of condescending people. Anyway, let's go. First family restaurant, then karaoke."

"Definitely no way."

I shout angrily, but on top of a lame leg, I don't have my 《Headphone Fuzz》 and couldn't resist. The two of them pull me along after them.

"Hey hey, you must be kidding me..... Wait. Kiri, save me."

But Kiri too smiles happily,

"Shinnosuke-kun, I'll pick up your 《Headphone Fuzz》 for you."

And off she goes.

For some reason, Gunjou too plods along without going home. She has that sad-looking face again. Looking at my unmoving right leg that's getting dragged along.

"..... ah, which reminds me, Gunjou."

"..... uwuh?"

"My right leg just has its nerves blocked so it seems like it can be fixed, so please don't make that face anymore, could you? It's really depressing."

"Eh?"

Gunjou's face,

"Eh? Eh? Seriously!?"

Gradually lightens up. Tears pile up in her eyes. She's really depressing.

On top of that, I'm going to go to a family restaurant and karaoke with this depressing bunch.

"This must be a joke, jeez."

While getting pulled, I look up at the sky in exasperation.

The sun has already completely set from the sky, and night starts to spread across it.

There are many clouds.

Not a single star can be seen.

Yet, for some reason, when I look at it, I can't see the world getting darker.

This should have been a rotten, foul, hopeless world, a shitty place where everyone is f**ked up by hypocrisy and deception, but yet, for some reason, right now a strange feeling is surfacing inside me.

"....."

And then, in the cloud-filled sky, a single crescent moon shines brightly, as if it were smirking at me.

Epilogue - In the first place, what does it mean to save the world?

Another half a month went by.

November.

A classroom.

From the balcony, the view of a common schoolyard can be seen.

The boys and girls from the normal curriculum, clad in their winter uniforms, are smiling at one another happily.

"As usual..... the trash are living with a trashy face huh."

With half-opened eyes, I murmur sneeringly with the corner of my lip raised in a slightly sardonic manner.

As I did that, a voice from the side speaks to me.

"That again ~"

It is a female voice.

I turn my eyes in the direction of the voice.

There, stood a girl who's a classmate of mine.

She is in a sailor uniform. With madder red hair and fair skin. Big eyes. A slender body with huge breasts.

It's Kiri.

Kiryuu Kiri.

Because of Asahi Momoka's labyrinth, the students of our school year had been reduced by half. Some died, some went mad from the fear, some dropped out of school.

And thus, Kiri transferred to my class. Thanks to Gunjou's barf-level efforts perhaps, 『Class 5』 had fewer casualties than other classes, and in order to make up for the reduced strength, Kiri was transferred to our class.

However, the lack of students lasted just momentarily. The empty seats were soon filled up with new talents. Since this school has been constantly conducting interviews, and there are many students who want to enroll in this school.

Five classes of twenty students each.

There are always replacements.

And ever since we did that little gloomy thing in clearing that labyrinth, we've become a little famous among them.

The team of heroes who cleared that unexpectedly high level labyrinth, which is also known as the Asahi Momoka incident that could have caused the deaths of 3 million people if things had gone wrong, is in

《Metropolitan Kichijouji High》 --- a rumor like this has been spreading around, getting embellished as it circulates.

Well, it was probably the doing of the school, perhaps. After all, if famous stars were born in this school, then they could gather capable people here, garner more sponsorship, and with that, rake in an even more abundant supply of funds and technology.

"....."

Several girls from the Normal Curriculum. who are in the midst of doing their P.E in an ordinary, peaceful world that has nothing to do with magic, labyrinths, or maladies, look up at the balcony of 『Class 5』 where we are at. They are saying something while pointing at us. Kyaa Kyaa, a chorus of incomprehensible laughter rings out from the side of that peaceful world.

From the side, Kiri looks at me with half-opened eyes,

"Now now, how does it feel when girls go kyaa kyaa at you?"

"Not interested."

"Liar, your nose's going to grow long, you know?"

"Hn ~? Aah, then let me say this. In truth, even though I look like this, I've been hiding my huge breasts, and in the past, guys had ogled at my breasts and went kyaa kyaa, so I've been used to it and can't be bothered by this by now."

After patting on my own chest a couple of times, I look at Kiri's breasts.
She looks at me in disgust.



"You really have a horrible personality."

"Eh, I've been trying to hide it, did you see through it?"

"Jeez, I really wish that you would put some serious effort in hiding that."

"Haha, if you don't like it, go away, would you?"

I say with a smirk and half-opened eyes.

But yet, she gazes at me happily and says.

"No way. I'm staying with you."

She comes to my side. Snuggles up to me.

With a step, I evade to the side.

"Eeh."

Kiri smiles.

I sigh.

"....."

It is a time of calm, and astounding peace, as if we were students from the Normal Curriculum. Even the temperature, is much more comfortable compared to the time when I first came here.

Gunjou's voice rings out from the classroom. She says to the newly enrolled students,

"There's one rule here. And that's to obey me. As long as you enslave yourselves to me, there won't be a problem."

Enslave?

Smiling, I turn around. Upon doing that, Gunjou and my eyes meet, she scowls a little, then averts her gaze from mine.

Shiro's prowled onto his desk, sleeping.

Yousuke and Himi are talking happily around him.

If I remember correctly, when I first met Kiri on this balcony, she said that she doesn't like to form 'cozy relationships'.

But I can feel that right now. Kiri, Shiro, Himi, Yousuke, and Gunjou --- 'cozy relationships'. That's right. This is how 'cozy relationships' feel like.

Thus, I ask the big-breasted woman who's standing beside me.

"Hey, Kiri."

"Hn?"

"There's something I've been meaning to ask."

"What's that, Shinnosuke-kun?"

About this 'cozy relationship' thing..... something which you should have hated, is there any special meaning to it in future?

Just as I'm about to ask that, the siren rings.

Biih Biih Biih.

The signal that indicates the appearance of a diseased girl.

"Paging for the students of the Girl Killing Curriculum. Return to your classrooms ASAP. A labyrinth disease afflicted victim has appeared in Hachioji, Tokyo. We're going to begin the lessons in killing the girl."

Kiri looks up, then looks in my direction.

The window glass of the classroom opens. Our teacher in-charge, Honjou Tsukasa-sensei pokes her head out and says.

"What're you guys doing, Shinnosuke, Kiri! Hurry up and return to the classroom!"

She's holding a thick stack of papers in her hands.

They are probably documents about the diseased girl in Hachioji.

The girl's profile.

Hobbies and interests.

About the labyrinth brought forth by the girl.

The details investigated by the researchers and scouting corps are fully written there.

I ask.

"Sensei..... how old is the girl and what's her name?"

As before, I'm thinking about the same thing. If the diseased girl is the same age as my little sister during her disease onset, it'd be an unpleasant thing.

Sensei then answers.

"That doesn't matter! Anyway, the girl must be killed! There's not much time, so hurry up!"

She slaps her hand against the window loudly.

"Now, let's quickly kill the girl, and save the world!"

She goes back into the classroom.

Kill the world and save the world.

Kill the girl, and save the world.

I look at the classroom. Gunjou looks at me. Himi, Yousuke as well. Shiro too gets up, and looks at me.

And lastly, Kiri says.

"So, she says. Ah, hey, Shinnosuke-kun."

"Hn?"

"Weren't you about to ask me something?"

On hearing that, I reply.

"Let's see. I forgot."

"What's with that ~"

"It must be something unimportant."

That's right. That isn't important. In a dark and rotten world like this, a world devoid of light, things like friendship, romance, and love are meaningless.

Because we are killing girls.

Because we are killing innocent girls who just have the misfortune of contracting a disease, in order to save the world.

How arrogant is that, I wonder. How hypocritical is that, I wonder.

But, even so, I saw a light inside of me. Though, that might just be called worthless friendships, dreams, and fantasies.

But someday.

Someday for sure.

I will no longer kill girls.

Not giving up on my little sister.

Someday, I will,

"..... save the girls, and save the world ---"

I murmur softly, those childish, silly words, and enter the classroom, with a smirk on my face.

Afterword

Hello, this is Kagami Takaya.

How was 『Apocalypse Alice (Mokushiroku Arisu)』 ?

Killing girls, six hour lessons.

Labyrinth disease.

Magic employed through depleting money --- 《Headphone Fuzz》 .

Young men and women with overwhelmingly bad personalities.

Magic in a seemingly school setting, but yet, in the fantastic world of labyrinths, a time limit exists.

This is a yarn about a group of students bearing their own burdens, a yarn that will never exist in the real world.

When I started writing this work, I had a goal in mind. And that is, to challenge myself and write a work with a whirling, vast setting that has never been done before in my previous works.

In order to do that, I chose to use a first-person narration, something which I haven't done for ages. Since my debut series. Ah, but, this might be the first time I'm using a first-person male narrative. The literary style also might be a little different from before.

This is my first new work under Fantasia Bunko label in 5 years. To top that, right before writing this work, I was spending, as I thought, a substantial amount of time in writing under a different publishing label another work, 『Seraph of the End (Owari no Serafu)』 series and it turns out to be very successful, so, in order not to hand up a sloppy piece of work --- this work you are reading --- in the following year to my debut work's publishing label, Fantasia Bunko label..... I got psyched, gave it my all and spent, as I thought, just about as much time in plot conception, and rewriting it (though I pretty much got psyched every time LOL); so how was it? I hope and would be pleased if you had fun reading it.

Ah, since this is my new work, there are probably new readers, so I shall introduce myself here.

I've written the following works for Fujimi:

『Military Lawyer El Wihn (Bukan Bengoshi Eru Uin』 series.

『The Legend of the Legendary Heroes ([[Densetsu_no_Yūsha_no_Densetsu#Dai_Densetsu_no_Yusha_no_Densetsu|Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu]])』 series.

『The Dark Rabbit Has Seven Lives ([[Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi]])』 series.

And, I'm writing the script for the following manga in Jump SQ:

『Seraph of the End (Owari no Serafu)』 series.

And writing for Kodansha Bunko label,

『Seraph of the End - Ichinose Glen, 16-year old's Catastrophe (Owari no Serafu - Ichinose Glen, 16-sai no Katasutorofi』

Ah, for those who felt like having read these works before, or haven't read these works but felt like having watched the anime before, long time no see! Thank you as always.

Thanks to everyone, I'm again able to create this very new work this day.

Whenever I'm writing a work, it becomes my favorite work then, so today, it's 『Apocalypse Alice's』 turn to be my favorite.

Shinnosuke will kick the ass of my other works! as I'm writing this book --- but, of course, when I writing the other works, the respective characters will scream out how they will kick the asses of the rest, and that will be my favorite work then, so for those who have any of them, thank you! I'll let Ryner and Yuu-chan and Glen and Taito and Wihn know.

And thus, from this day onward, a new story starts.

A story about killing girls to save the world.

It'll be nice that Shinnosuke, Gunjou, Kiri, and Shiro can continue to flourish from the support of everyone.

In this seemingly long yet short life, in this very instant, this very second --- truly, a moment that will occur only once, it's fun to be able to share the same world view with the readers, and it'd be a blessing if we could have a verbal exchange on it, I hope. Even though it will occur only once, a but transient moment, it's still an important moment --- here, with

《Acceleration Switch!》, I want to tear through it together with everyone!

Well then, please continue to support 『Apocalypse Alice』 !

Kagami Takaya

References

1. ↑ Headphone Fuzz: Always written as Intra-Cerebral Magic Activator (脳内魔導起機), and read as Headphone Fuzz (ヘッドフォンファズ). Subsequently in the rest of the volume, I will only use the reading in the translations.

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